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Full-Color Annual

$2.75 U.S./$3.50 Can.

Join *Jennifer Mays* and *Gabriel Webb* in this first *MAZE AGENCY ANNUAL* for three fair-play whodunits that challenge you to solve the mysteries as they unfold!

In "A Night At The Rose Petal," cover artist **Mike Ploog**, writer **Mike W. Barr**, and artists **Rick Magyar** and **William Messner-Loebs** offer a lovely hommage to *The Spirit* in honor of its 50th Anniversary!

In "Moving Stiffs," Gabe Webb finally moves into Jennifer Mays' brownstone -- to uncover the maddening mystery of a man found dead in Gabe's packing box! This story, illustrated by **Allen Curtis**, continues the storyline from ***THE MAZE AGENCY #15***.

PLUS: "Murder In Mint Condition," the rare comic convention ***MAZE AGENCY*** story, is featured here complete in color for the first time! It's illustrated by **Adam Hughes** and **Rick Magyar**!

Get Into The Spirit
Of THE MAZE AGENCY!

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INNOVATION™

The Anniversary Of A Legend

...So author Mike W. Barr writes a lettercol/text page, and that goes in the back of this book. So what should go on my inside front cover? Not some generic editorial -- certainly not for ***THE MAZE AGENCY ANNUAL #1***. But we, only half a year ago, did ***THE MAZE AGENCY SPECIAL #1***. And the text page did all the salient riffs there. Hmm.

How about: We all were really proud of the ***SPECIAL***, although we're all in agreement that it printed too dark. I suspect that this one will look better. (If you missed it, it's available from us by mail for $3.50, including shipping.)

This ***ANNUAL*** commemorates the 50th Anniversary of Will Eisner's *The Spirit* with "A Night at the Rose Petal."

Mike Barr has said in the fan press, "Of all the big anniversaries we've seen in the business over the past few years, I'd say the Will Eisner/*Spirit* one is probably the most important -- not only does it celebrate 50 years of *The Spirit*, it also honors Will Eisner's involvement since the Spirit's creation. We've been long-time admirers of Will Eisner and his work.

"In the planning stages of this hommage, two names kept coming to mind as perfect to help out, and we were lucky enough to enlist the aid of both: Mike Ploog (a former assistant of Eisner's) and William Messner-Loebs (a student of Eisner's)."

When Mike suggested that we do the Will Eisner/*Spirit* tribute, I thought it was a great idea. (Nobody told us it'd be *impossible* to get Mike Ploog or William Messner-Loebs for this...so, not knowing any better, we went out and *got* both!)

Then Mike Barr turned in another story that followed the continuity directly from ***THE MAZE AGENCY #15***, so we decided to do ***THE MAZE AGENCY ANNUAL #1*** in the same multi-story format that was so successful in the ***SPECIAL***.

This also gave us the opportunity to include a third story that we've been wanting to use for a while. "Murder In Mint Condition" originally appeared as a promotional flyer at the 1988 San Diego ComiCon -- and the final page, which solves the crime, ran in the *Comics Buyer's Guide* after the convention. The story also saw print in ***MAZE BOOK #1***, which has never seen full distribution, and is now featured here, in full color, for the very first time.

-- David Campiti
June, 1990

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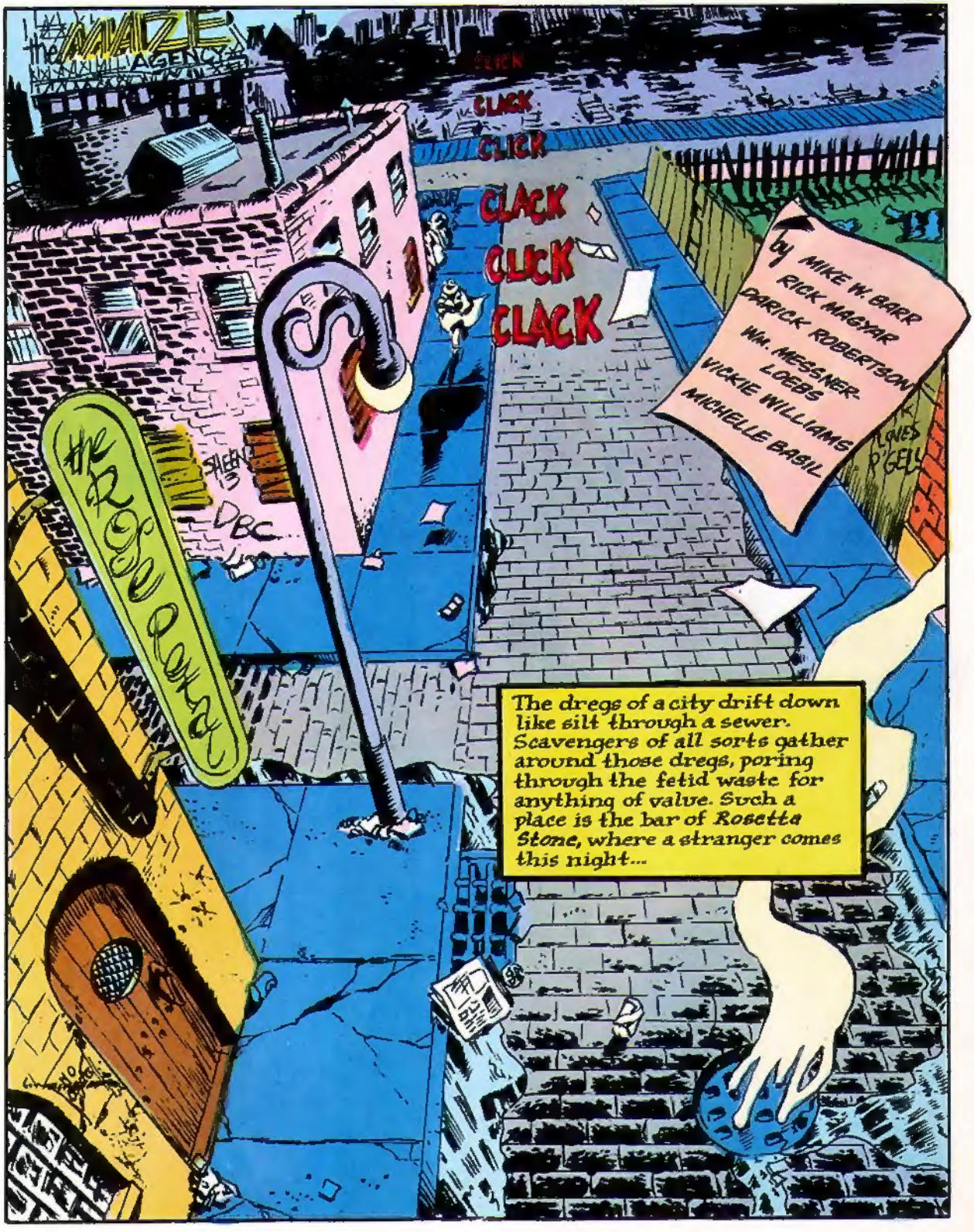
A NIGHT at the Rose Petal

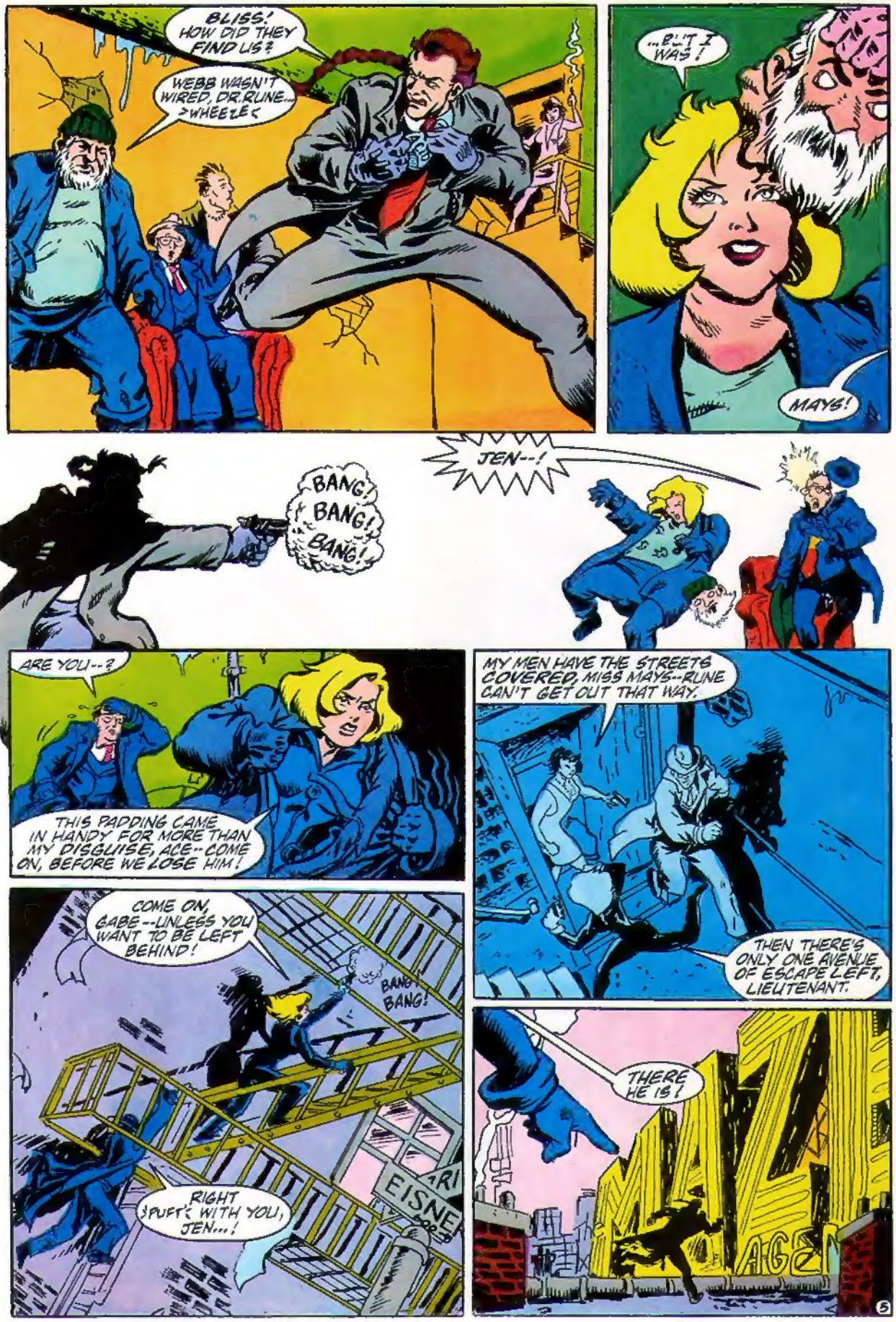
SUSPENSE
Romance
RATIOCINATION

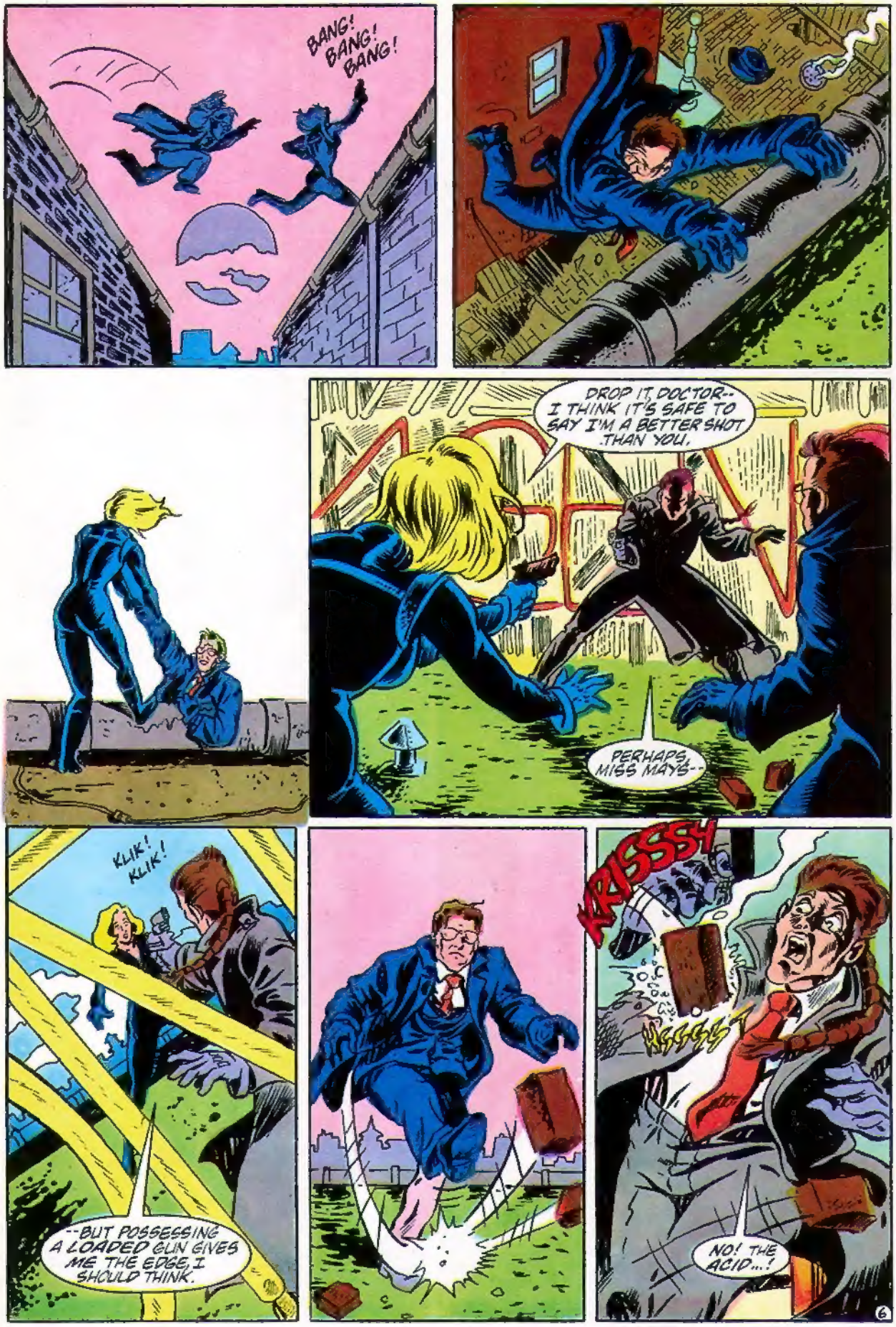


WHAT'LL IT BE, FRIEND?
PRIVATE
JUNE 2 1990
MILK.
WE DON'T GET MANY REQUESTS FOR MILK IN HERE.
I'VE GOT ANOTHER REQUEST YOU PROBABLY DON'T HEAR VERY OFTEN--
--I WANT TO SEE DOCTOR RUNE!
GURRKK!
SAY, ARE YOU A COP?
I'LL TELL THAT TO DR. RUNE.
I DUNNO WHAT YER TALKIN' ABOUT, FRIEND--HEY! ROSIE!
TROUBLE, FINN?
2

PRIVATE
COLD NIGHT FOR JUNE, HUH, HANDSOME?
NOT THAT COLD.
WHATSAMATTER, SONNY? =WHEEEZE= DON'CHA LIKE GIRLS?
SHOVE OFF, POP.
I THINK WE CAN OBLIGE OUR FRIEND. WHILE HE'S WAITING, WHY DON'T YOU POUR HIM ONE OF ROSIE'S SPECIALS, FINN?
SURE THING, ROSIE.
SAY THANKS! WILL YOU JOIN ME?
YOU FIRST.
WELL, HERE'S TO CRIME.
->GAAAAAK!<-
WHAT... WAS IN... DRINK?
ROSIE!

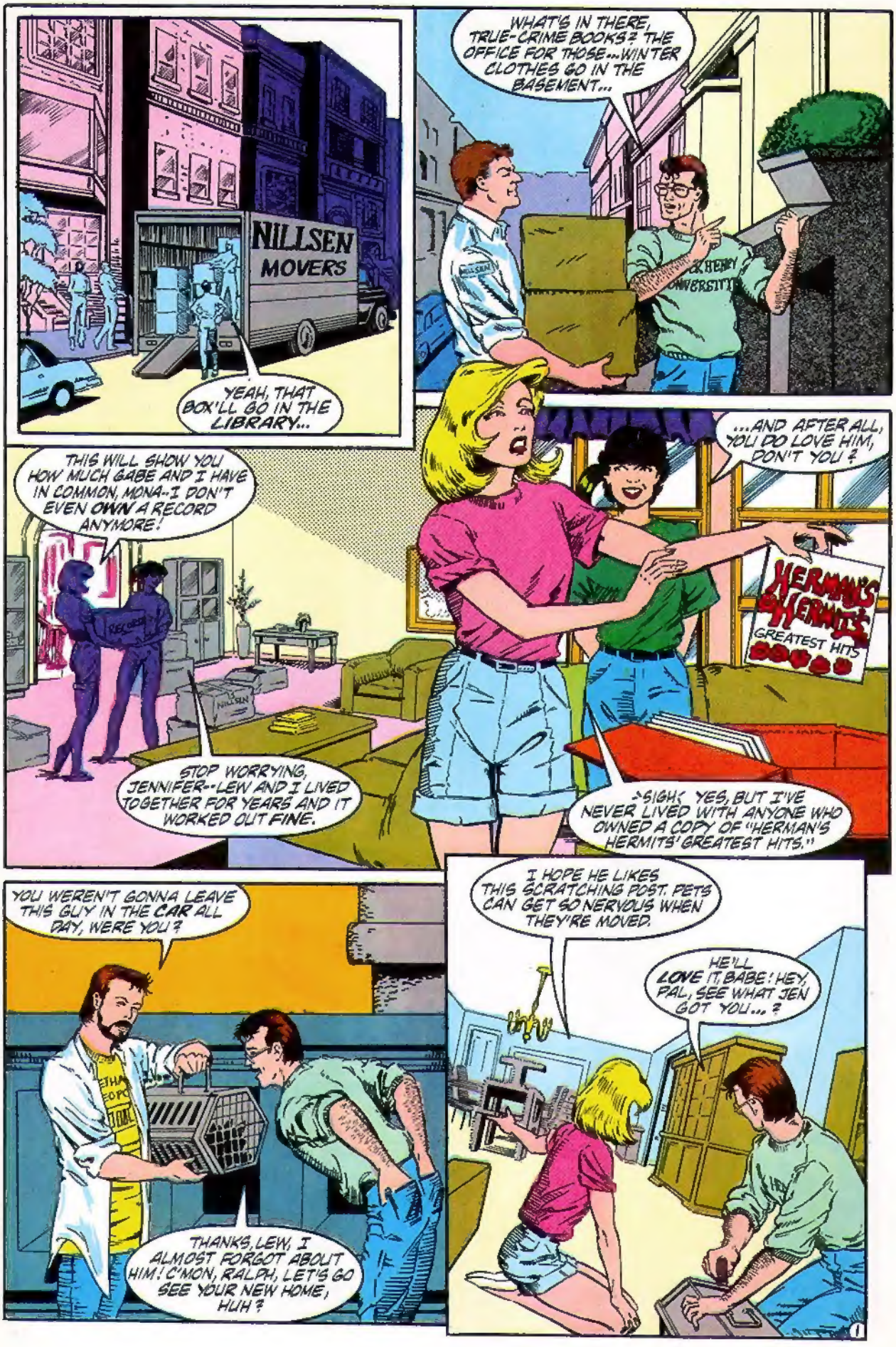
GET HIM OUTTA HERE!
I'LL TAKE CARE OF HIM, ROSIE! COME ALONG IF YOU WANNA JOB, FAT STUFF-- YOU GOT PRETTY GOOD MOVES!
THANKS. >WHEEEZE<
WHY DID YOU BRING HIM HERE?
DON'T WORRY, DOC, WE WEREN'T FOLLOWED, AND HE AIN'T WIRED.
YOU CONTINUE TO BE A THORN IN MY SIDE, MR. WEBB. EXPLAIN TO ME WHY I SHOULD NOT REMOVE YOU, PERMANENTLY.
ACID
THE WORD WAS THAT YOU WERE LEAVING THE COUNTRY... I WANTED TO FIND YOU... SO JENNIFER WOULD RESPECT ME.
AH, THE PRIMEVAL INSTINCT TO IMPRESS ONE'S MATE— ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL AND EASILY-MANIPULATED FORCES IN THE WORLD...
NO, DOC, WE'VE GOTTA LEAVE THE COUNTRY...
PERHAPS WE SHALL SEE IF MISS MAY'S PROTECTIVE INSTINCTS TOWARD HER MATE RUN EQUALLY STRONG, EH? WHAT MIGHT SHE DO TO PREVENT HARM TO YOU...?
BANG BANG BANG
UNGGGH!
PASSSSSH
YOU'RE BUSTED, RUNE!

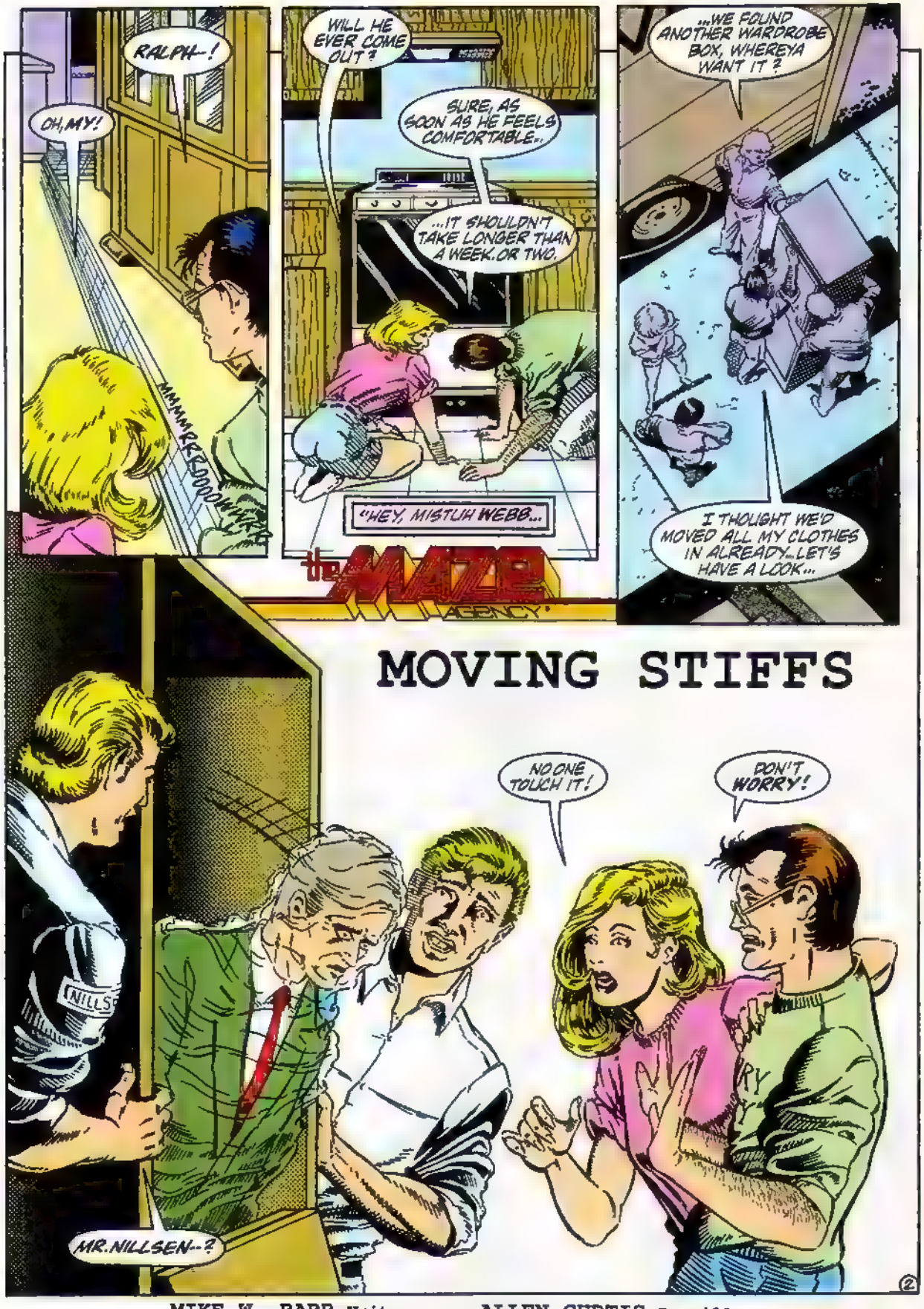

BLISS! HOW DID THEY FIND US?
WEBB WASN'T WIRED, DR. RUNE... >WHEEZE<
...BUT I WAS!
MAYS!
BANG! BANG! BANG!
JEN--!
ARE YOU--?
THIS PADDING CAME IN HANDY FOR MORE THAN MY DISGUISE, ACE--COME ON, BEFORE WE LOSE HIM!
MY MEN HAVE THE STREETS COVERED, MISS MAYS--RUNE CAN'T GET OUT THAT WAY.
THEN THERE'S ONLY ONE AVENUE OF ESCAPE LEFT, LIEUTENANT.
COME ON, GABE--UNLESS YOU WANT TO BE LEFT BEHIND!
BANG! BANG!
RIGHT >PUFF< WITH YOU, JEN...!
THERE HE IS!
5


BANG! BANG! BANG!
DROP IT, DOCTOR-- I THINK IT'S SAFE TO SAY I'M A BETTER SHOT THAN YOU.
PERHAPS, MISS MAYS--
KLIK! KLIK!
--BUT POSSESSING A LOADED GUN GIVES ME THE EDGE, I SHOULD THINK.
KRISSSH
NO! THE ACID...!

LOOK OUT--!
CRRRRZ
SO THAT'S WHERE YOU WERE GOING TONIGHT... I PICKED UP SOME SCUTTLEBUTT ABOUT RUNE WHILE I WAS RESEARCHING AN ARTICLE, AND THOUGHT I'D IMPRESS YOU.
YOU KNOW ME BETTER THAN THAT, MISTER--YOU DON'T NEED TO IMPRESS ME.
NOT A BAD NIGHT--BUT A LITTLE QUIET.
WE'VE COMBED THE RIVER, BUT WE NEVER DID FIND HIS BODY, MISS MAYS.
I'M CERTAIN IT WILL TURN UP, LIEUTENANT.
WHEN THEY LEAST EXPECT IT!

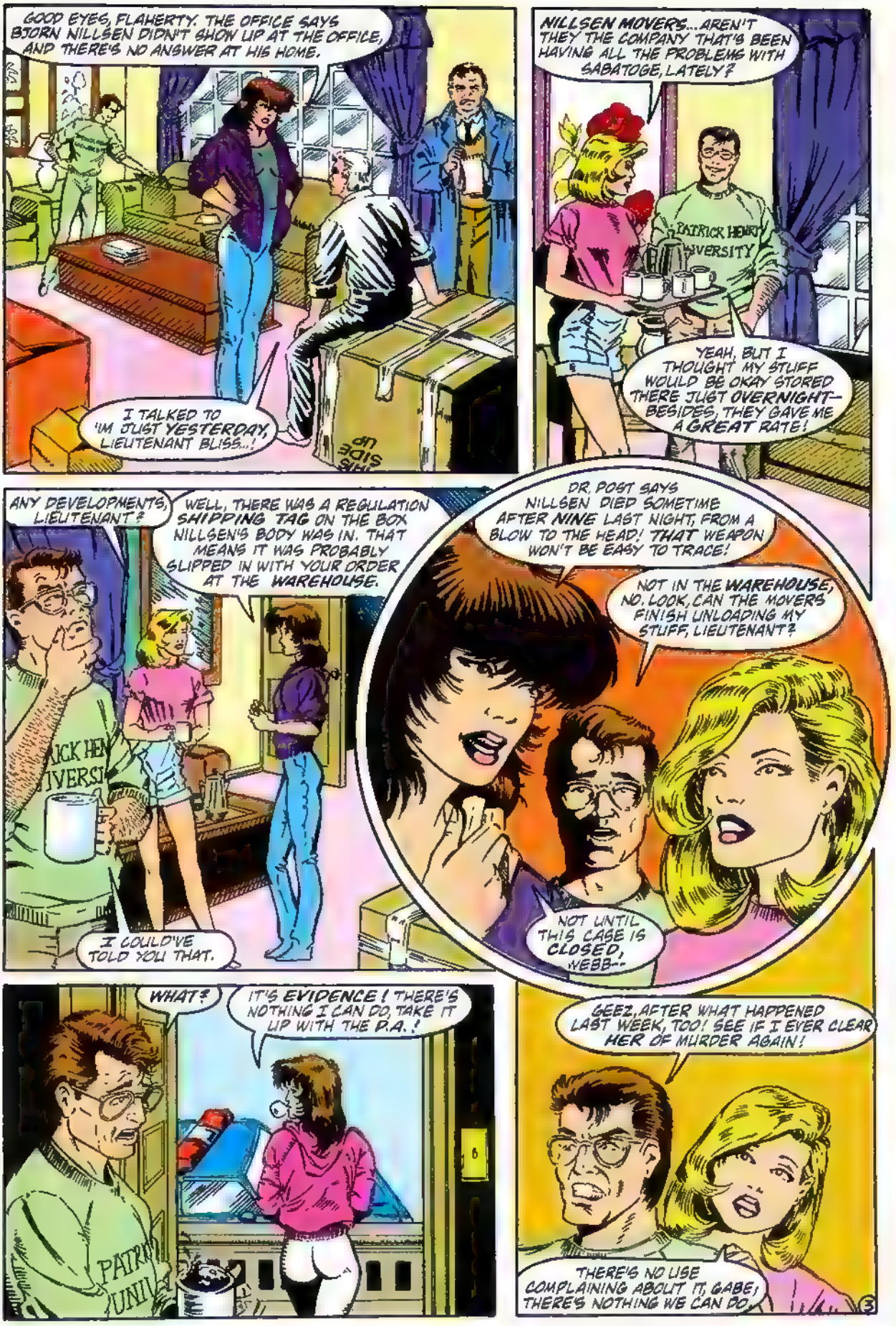
End

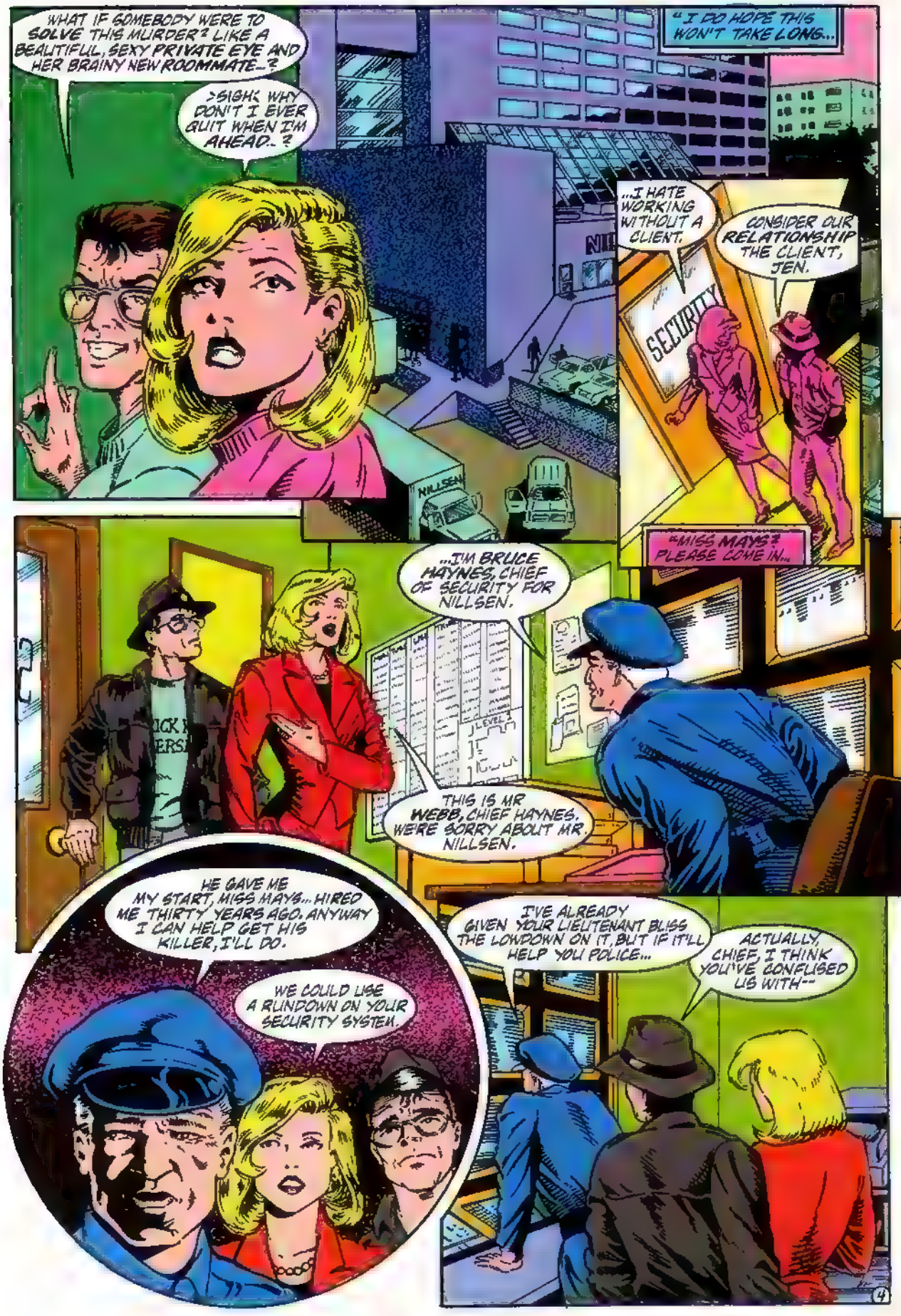

NILLSEN MOVERS
YEAH, THAT BOX'LL GO IN THE LIBRARY...
WHAT'S IN THERE, TRUE-CRIME BOOKS? THE OFFICE FOR THOSE...WINTER CLOTHES GO IN THE BASEMENT...
...AND AFTER ALL, YOU DO LOVE HIM, DON'T YOU?
THIS WILL SHOW YOU HOW MUCH GABE AND I HAVE IN COMMON, MONA--I DON'T EVEN OWN A RECORD ANYMORE!
HERMAN'S HERMITS GREATEST HITS
STOP WORRYING, JENNIFER--LEW AND I LIVED TOGETHER FOR YEARS AND IT WORKED OUT FINE.
...SIGH... YES, BUT I'VE NEVER LIVED WITH ANYONE WHO OWNED A COPY OF "HERMAN'S HERMITS' GREATEST HITS."
YOU WEREN'T GONNA LEAVE THIS GUY IN THE CAR ALL DAY, WERE YOU?
THANKS, LEW, I ALMOST FORGOT ABOUT HIM! C'MON, RALPH, LET'S GO SEE YOUR NEW HOME, HUH?
I HOPE HE LIKES THIS SCRATCHING POST. PETS CAN GET SO NERVOUS WHEN THEY'RE MOVED.
HE'LL LOVE IT, BABE! HEY, PAL, SEE WHAT JEN GOT YOU...?

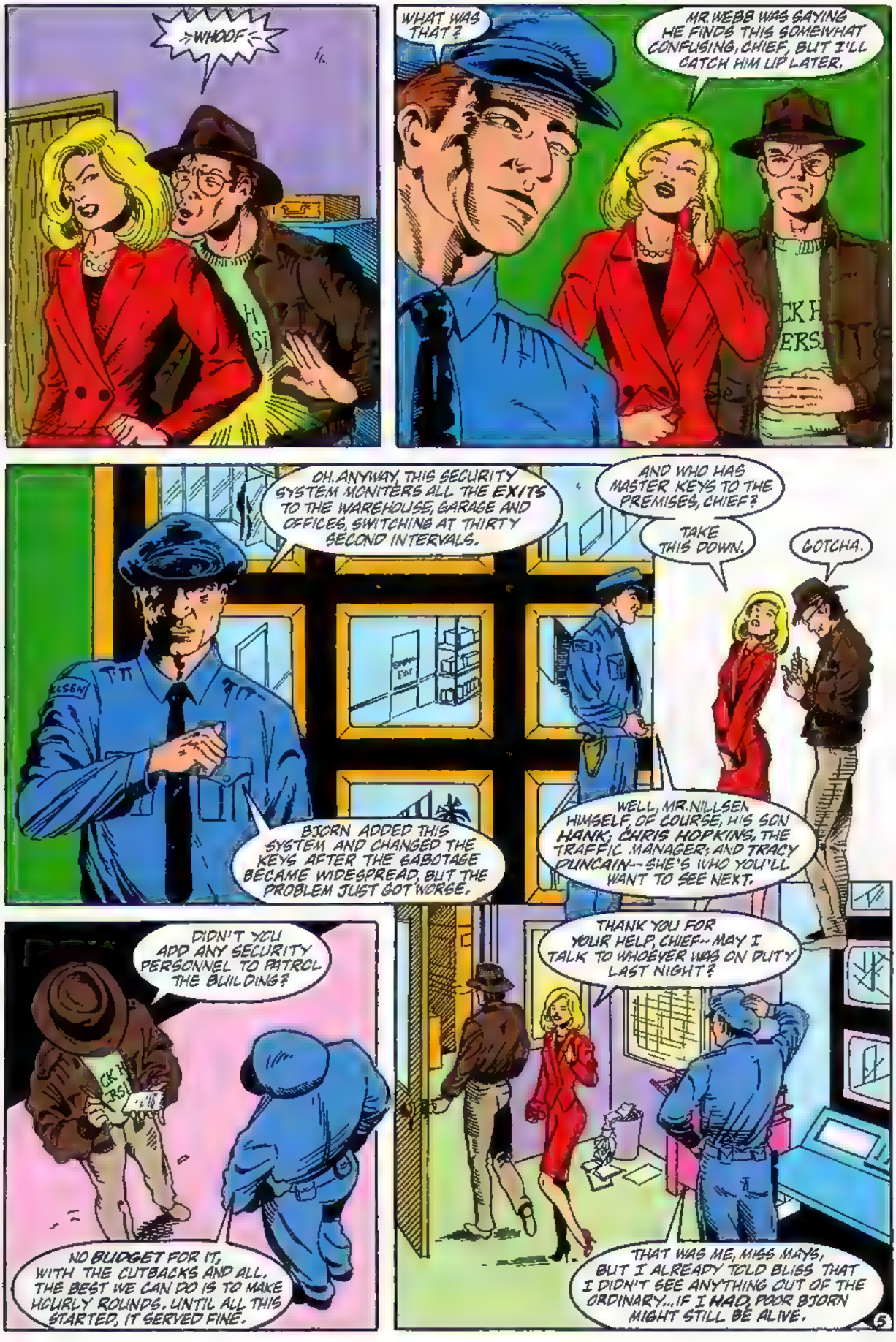


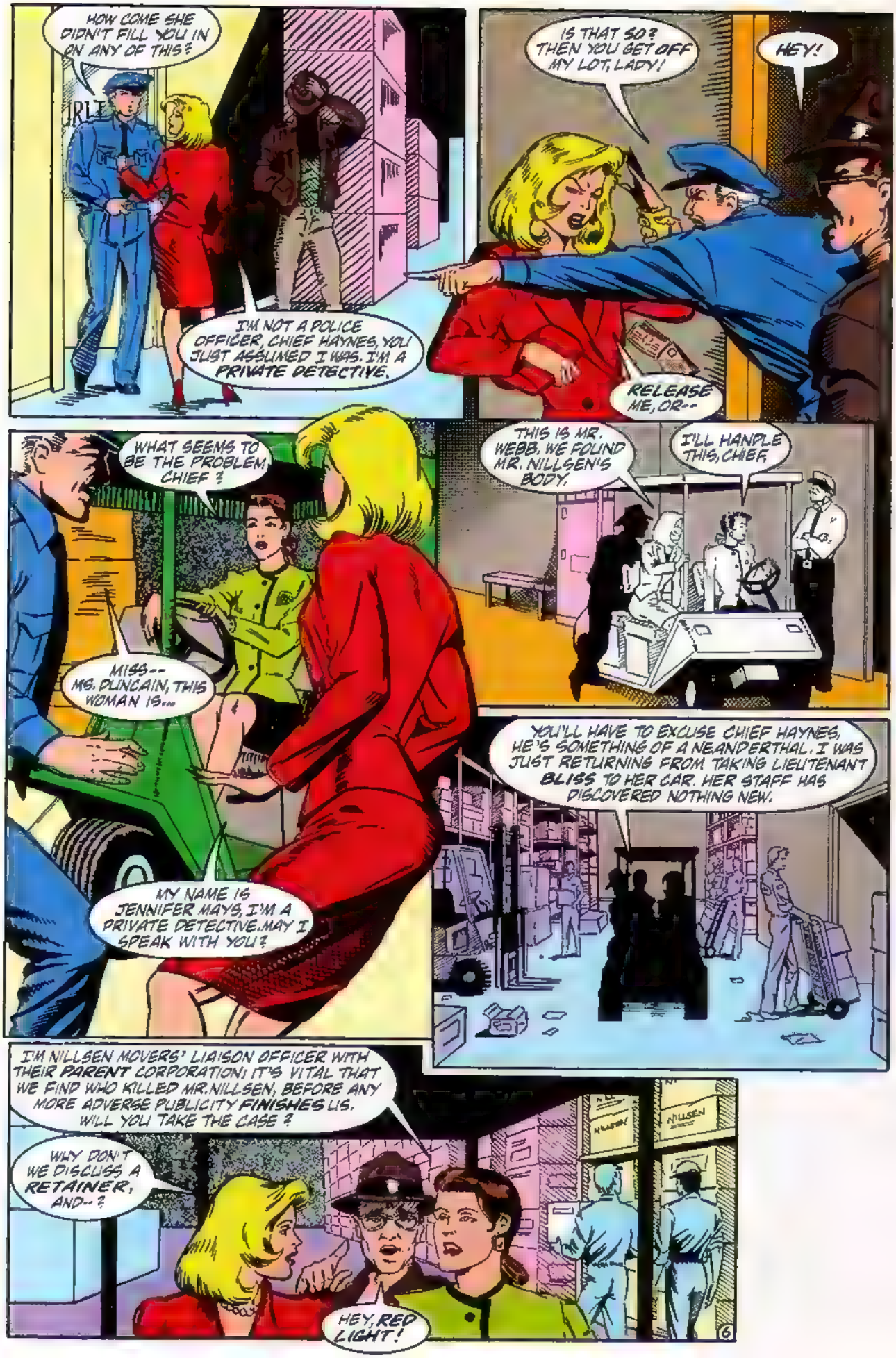
MOVING STIFFS

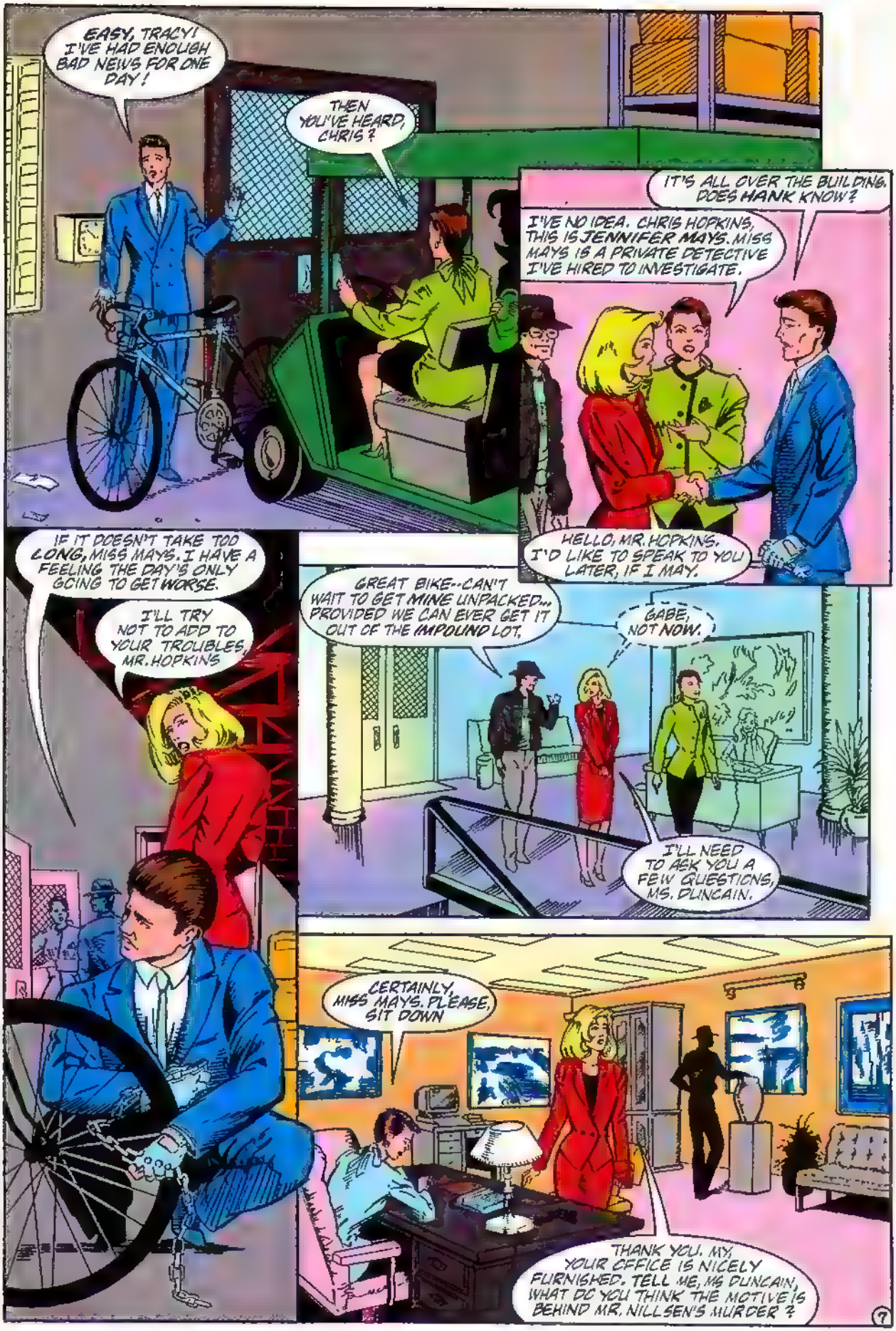
MIKE W. BARR *Writer* ALLEN CURTIS *Penciller*
KEITH AIKEN & JIM SINCLAIR *Inkers*
VICKIE WILLIAMS *Letterer* MICHELLE BASIL *Colorist*

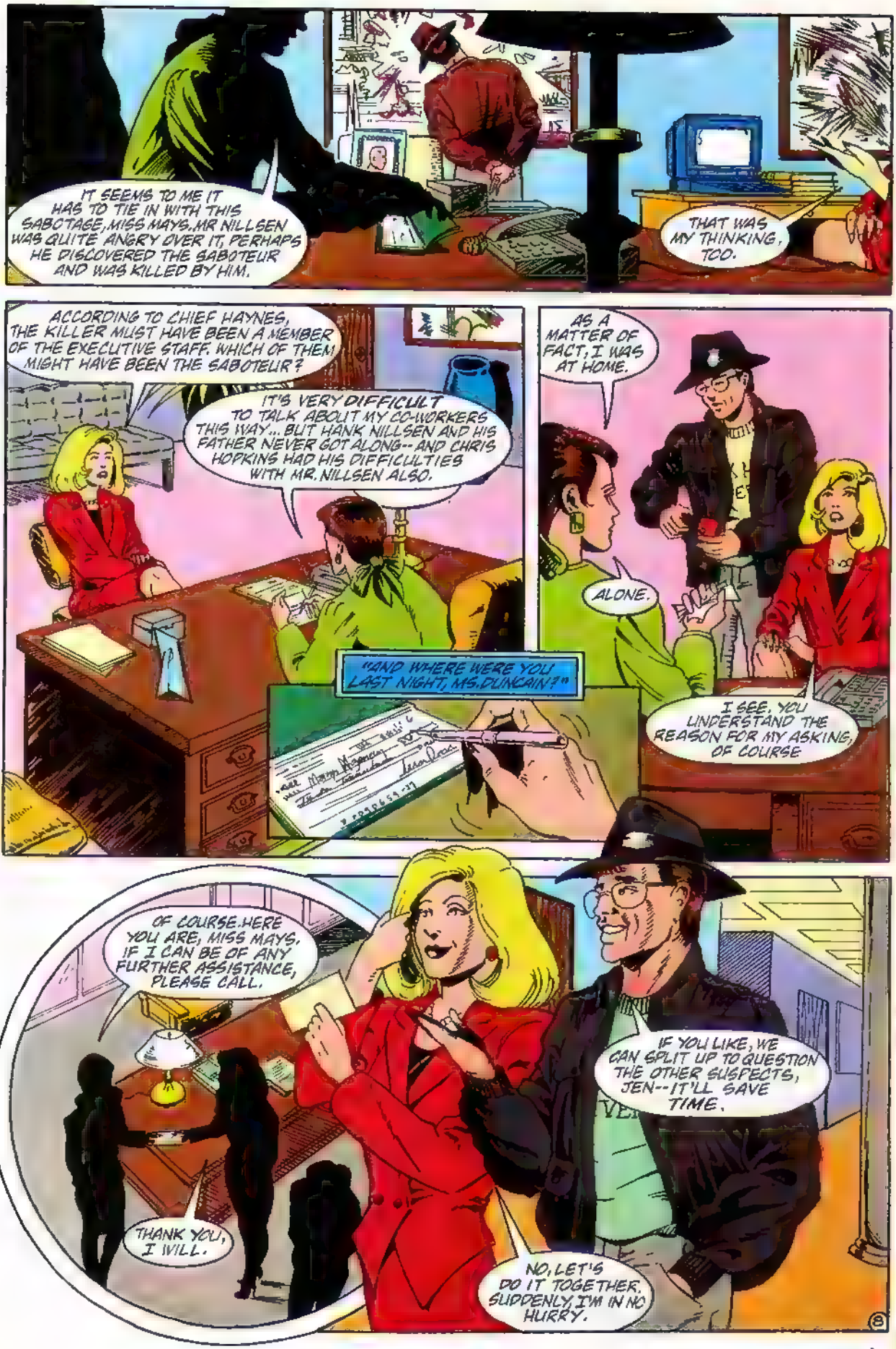

GOOD EYES, FLAHERTY. THE OFFICE SAYS BJORN NILLSEN DIDN'T SHOW UP AT THE OFFICE, AND THERE'S NO ANSWER AT HIS HOME.
I TALKED TO 'IM JUST YESTERDAY, LIEUTENANT BLISS...!
THIS SIDE UP
NILLSEN MOVERS... AREN'T THEY THE COMPANY THAT'S BEEN HAVING ALL THE PROBLEMS WITH SABATOGE, LATELY?
PATRICK HENRY UNIVERSITY
YEAH, BUT I THOUGHT MY STUFF WOULD BE OKAY STORED THERE JUST OVERNIGHT— BESIDES, THEY GAVE ME A GREAT RATE!
ANY DEVELOPMENTS, LIEUTENANT?
WELL, THERE WAS A REGULATION SHIPPING TAG ON THE BOX NILLSEN'S BODY WAS IN. THAT MEANS IT WAS PROBABLY SLIPPED IN WITH YOUR ORDER AT THE WAREHOUSE.
I COULD'VE TOLD YOU THAT.
DR. POST SAYS NILLSEN DIED SOMETIME AFTER NINE LAST NIGHT, FROM A BLOW TO THE HEAD! THAT WEAPON WON'T BE EASY TO TRACE!
NOT IN THE WAREHOUSE, NO. LOOK, CAN THE MOVERS FINISH UNLOADING MY STUFF, LIEUTENANT?
NOT UNTIL THIS CASE IS CLOSED, WEBB--
WHAT?
IT'S EVIDENCE! THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO, TAKE IT UP WITH THE D.A.!
GEEZ, AFTER WHAT HAPPENED LAST WEEK, TOO! SEE IF I EVER CLEAR HER OF MURDER AGAIN!
THERE'S NO USE COMPLAINING ABOUT IT, GABE; THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO.
3


WHAT IF SOMEBODY WERE TO SOLVE THIS MURDER? LIKE A BEAUTIFUL, SEXY PRIVATE EYE AND HER BRAINY NEW ROOMMATE...?
>SIGH< WHY DON'T I EVER QUIT WHEN I'M AHEAD...?
"I DO HOPE THIS WON'T TAKE LONG...
...I HATE WORKING WITHOUT A CLIENT.
CONSIDER OUR RELATIONSHIP THE CLIENT, JEN.
SECURITY
NILLSEN
"MISS MAYS? PLEASE COME IN...
...I'M BRUCE HAYNES, CHIEF OF SECURITY FOR NILLSEN.
THIS IS MR WEBB, CHIEF HAYNES. WE'RE SORRY ABOUT MR. NILLSEN.
HE GAVE ME MY START, MISS MAYS... HIRED ME THIRTY YEARS AGO. ANYWAY I CAN HELP GET HIS KILLER, I'LL DO.
WE COULD USE A RUNDOWN ON YOUR SECURITY SYSTEM.
I'VE ALREADY GIVEN YOUR LIEUTENANT BLISS THE LOWDOWN ON IT, BUT IF IT'LL HELP YOU POLICE...
ACTUALLY, CHIEF, I THINK YOU'VE CONFUSED US WITH--
4


>WHOOF<
WHAT WAS THAT?
MR. WEBB WAS SAYING HE FINDS THIS SOMEWHAT CONFUSING, CHIEF, BUT I'LL CATCH HIM UP LATER.
OH. ANYWAY, THIS SECURITY SYSTEM MONITERS ALL THE EXITS TO THE WAREHOUSE, GARAGE AND OFFICES, SWITCHING AT THIRTY SECOND INTERVALS.
AND WHO HAS MASTER KEYS TO THE PREMISES, CHIEF?
TAKE THIS DOWN.
GOTCHA.
BJORN ADDED THIS SYSTEM AND CHANGED THE KEYS AFTER THE SABOTAGE BECAME WIDESPREAD, BUT THE PROBLEM JUST GOT WORSE.
WELL, MR. NILLSEN HIMSELF, OF COURSE, HIS SON HANK; CHRIS HOPKINS, THE TRAFFIC MANAGER; AND TRACY DUNCAIN-- SHE'S WHO YOU'LL WANT TO SEE NEXT.
DIDN'T YOU ADD ANY SECURITY PERSONNEL TO PATROL THE BUILDING?
NO BUDGET FOR IT, WITH THE CUTBACKS AND ALL. THE BEST WE CAN DO IS TO MAKE HOURLY ROUNDS. UNTIL ALL THIS STARTED, IT SERVED FINE.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP, CHIEF-- MAY I TALK TO WHOEVER WAS ON DUTY LAST NIGHT?
THAT WAS ME, MISS MAYS, BUT I ALREADY TOLD BLISS THAT I DIDN'T SEE ANYTHING OUT OF THE ORDINARY...IF I HAD, POOR BJORN MIGHT STILL BE ALIVE.


HOW COME SHE DIDN'T FILL YOU IN ON ANY OF THIS?
I'M NOT A POLICE OFFICER, CHIEF HAYNES, YOU JUST ASSUMED I WAS. I'M A PRIVATE DETECTIVE.
IS THAT SO? THEN YOU GET OFF MY LOT, LADY!
HEY!
RELEASE ME, OR--
WHAT SEEMS TO BE THE PROBLEM, CHIEF?
MISS-- MS. DUNCAIN, THIS WOMAN IS...
MY NAME IS JENNIFER MAYS, I'M A PRIVATE DETECTIVE. MAY I SPEAK WITH YOU?
THIS IS MR. WEBB, WE FOUND MR. NILLSEN'S BODY.
I'LL HANDLE THIS, CHIEF.
YOU'LL HAVE TO EXCUSE CHIEF HAYNES, HE'S SOMETHING OF A NEANDERTHAL. I WAS JUST RETURNING FROM TAKING LIEUTENANT BLISS TO HER CAR. HER STAFF HAS DISCOVERED NOTHING NEW.
I'M NILLSEN MOVERS' LIAISON OFFICER WITH THEIR PARENT CORPORATION; IT'S VITAL THAT WE FIND WHO KILLED MR. NILLSEN, BEFORE ANY MORE ADVERSE PUBLICITY FINISHES US. WILL YOU TAKE THE CASE?
WHY DON'T WE DISCUSS A RETAINER, AND--?
HEY, RED LIGHT!
NILLSEN
NILLSEN
6


EASY, TRACY! I'VE HAD ENOUGH BAD NEWS FOR ONE DAY!
THEN YOU'VE HEARD, CHRIS?
IT'S ALL OVER THE BUILDING. DOES HANK KNOW?
I'VE NO IDEA. CHRIS HOPKINS, THIS IS JENNIFER MAYS. MISS MAYS IS A PRIVATE DETECTIVE I'VE HIRED TO INVESTIGATE.
HELLO, MR. HOPKINS. I'D LIKE TO SPEAK TO YOU LATER, IF I MAY.
IF IT DOESN'T TAKE TOO LONG, MISS MAYS. I HAVE A FEELING THE DAY'S ONLY GOING TO GET WORSE.
I'LL TRY NOT TO ADD TO YOUR TROUBLES, MR. HOPKINS
GREAT BIKE--CAN'T WAIT TO GET MINE UNPACKED... PROVIDED WE CAN EVER GET IT OUT OF THE IMPOUND LOT.
GABE, NOT NOW.
I'LL NEED TO ASK YOU A FEW QUESTIONS, MS. DUNCAIN.
CERTAINLY, MISS MAYS. PLEASE, SIT DOWN
THANK YOU. MY, YOUR OFFICE IS NICELY FURNISHED. TELL ME, MS DUNCAIN, WHAT DO YOU THINK THE MOTIVE IS BEHIND MR. NILLSEN'S MURDER?


IT SEEMS TO ME IT HAS TO TIE IN WITH THIS SABOTAGE, MISS MAYS. MR NILLSEN WAS QUITE ANGRY OVER IT, PERHAPS HE DISCOVERED THE SABOTEUR AND WAS KILLED BY HIM.
THAT WAS MY THINKING, TOO.
ACCORDING TO CHIEF HAYNES, THE KILLER MUST HAVE BEEN A MEMBER OF THE EXECUTIVE STAFF. WHICH OF THEM MIGHT HAVE BEEN THE SABOTEUR?
IT'S VERY DIFFICULT TO TALK ABOUT MY CO-WORKERS THIS WAY... BUT HANK NILLSEN AND HIS FATHER NEVER GOT ALONG--AND CHRIS HOPKINS HAD HIS DIFFICULTIES WITH MR. NILLSEN ALSO.
"AND WHERE WERE YOU LAST NIGHT, MS. DUNCAIN?"
AS A MATTER OF FACT, I WAS AT HOME.
ALONE.
I SEE. YOU UNDERSTAND THE REASON FOR MY ASKING, OF COURSE
OF COURSE. HERE YOU ARE, MISS MAYS. IF I CAN BE OF ANY FURTHER ASSISTANCE, PLEASE CALL.
IF YOU LIKE, WE CAN SPLIT UP TO QUESTION THE OTHER SUSPECTS, JEN--IT'LL SAVE TIME.
THANK YOU, I WILL.
NO, LET'S DO IT TOGETHER. SUDDENLY, I'M IN NO HURRY.
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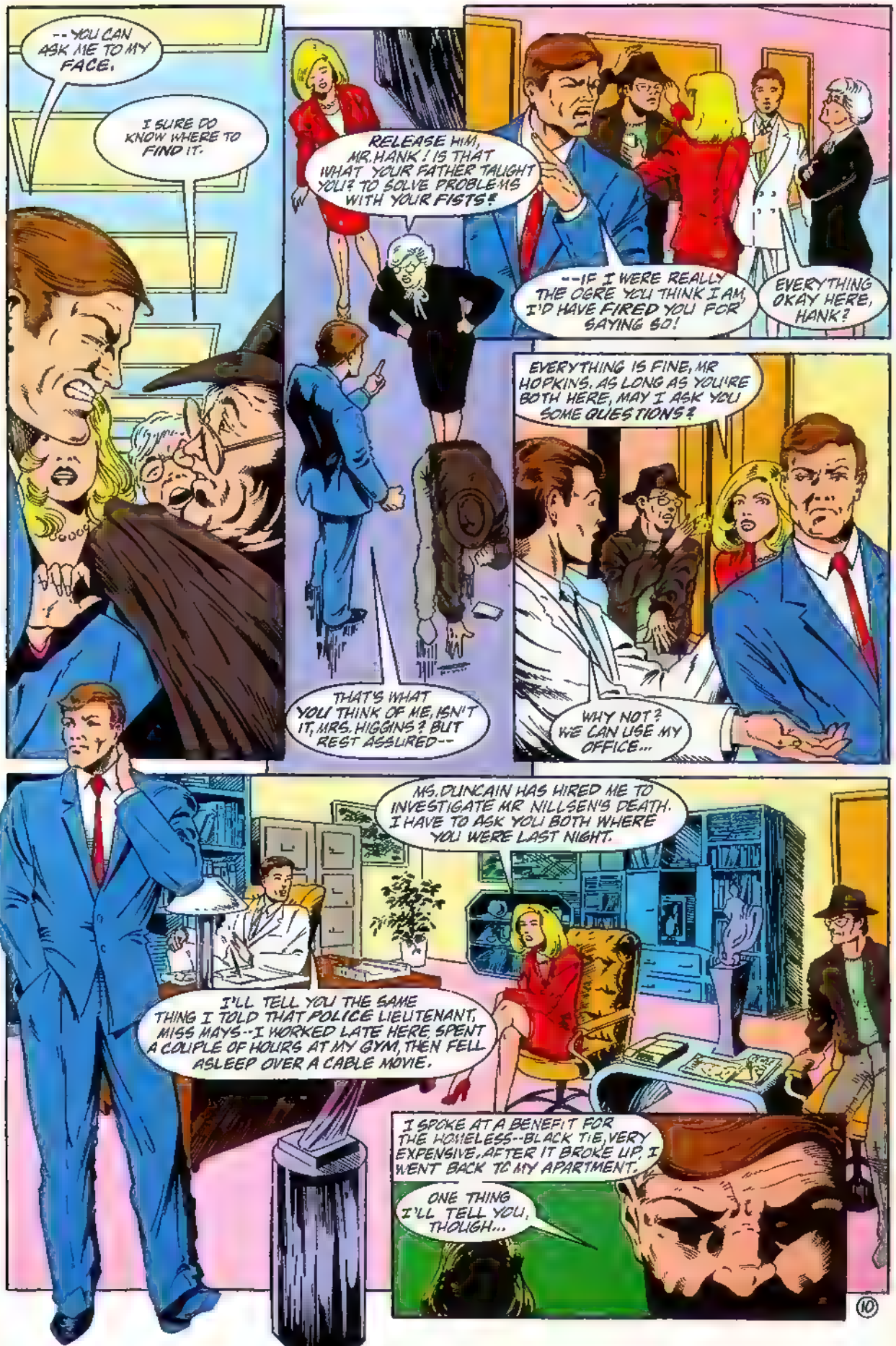
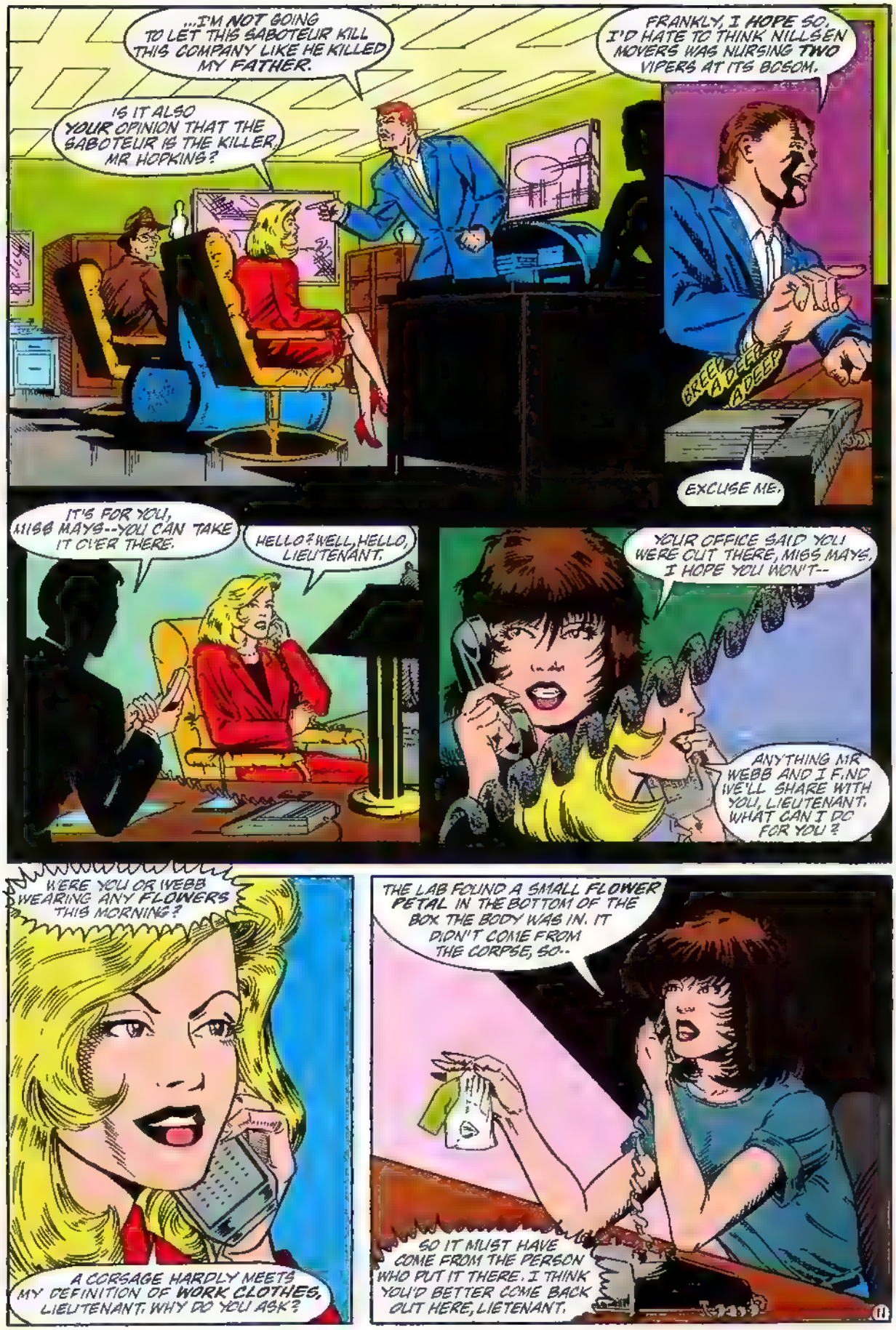
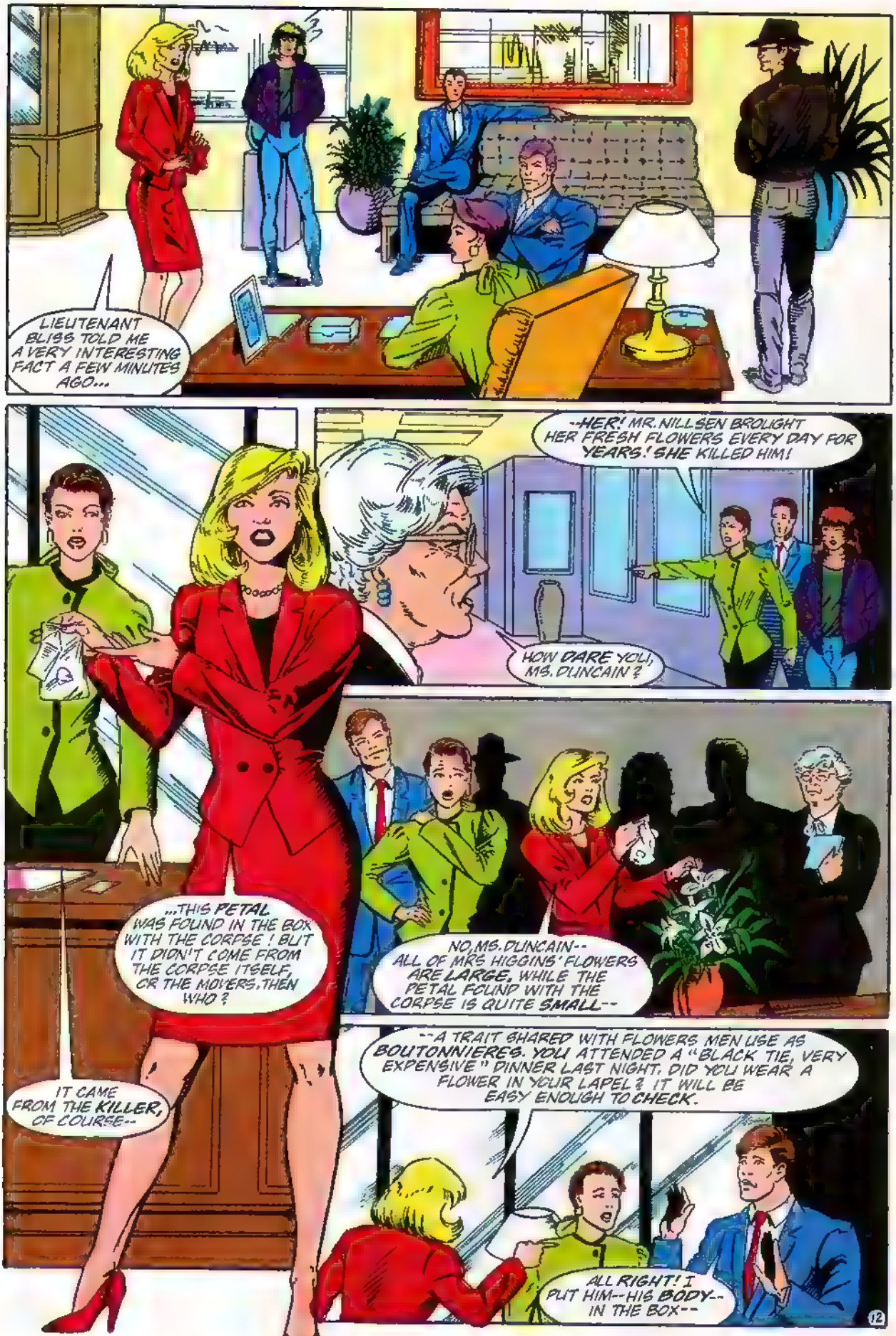
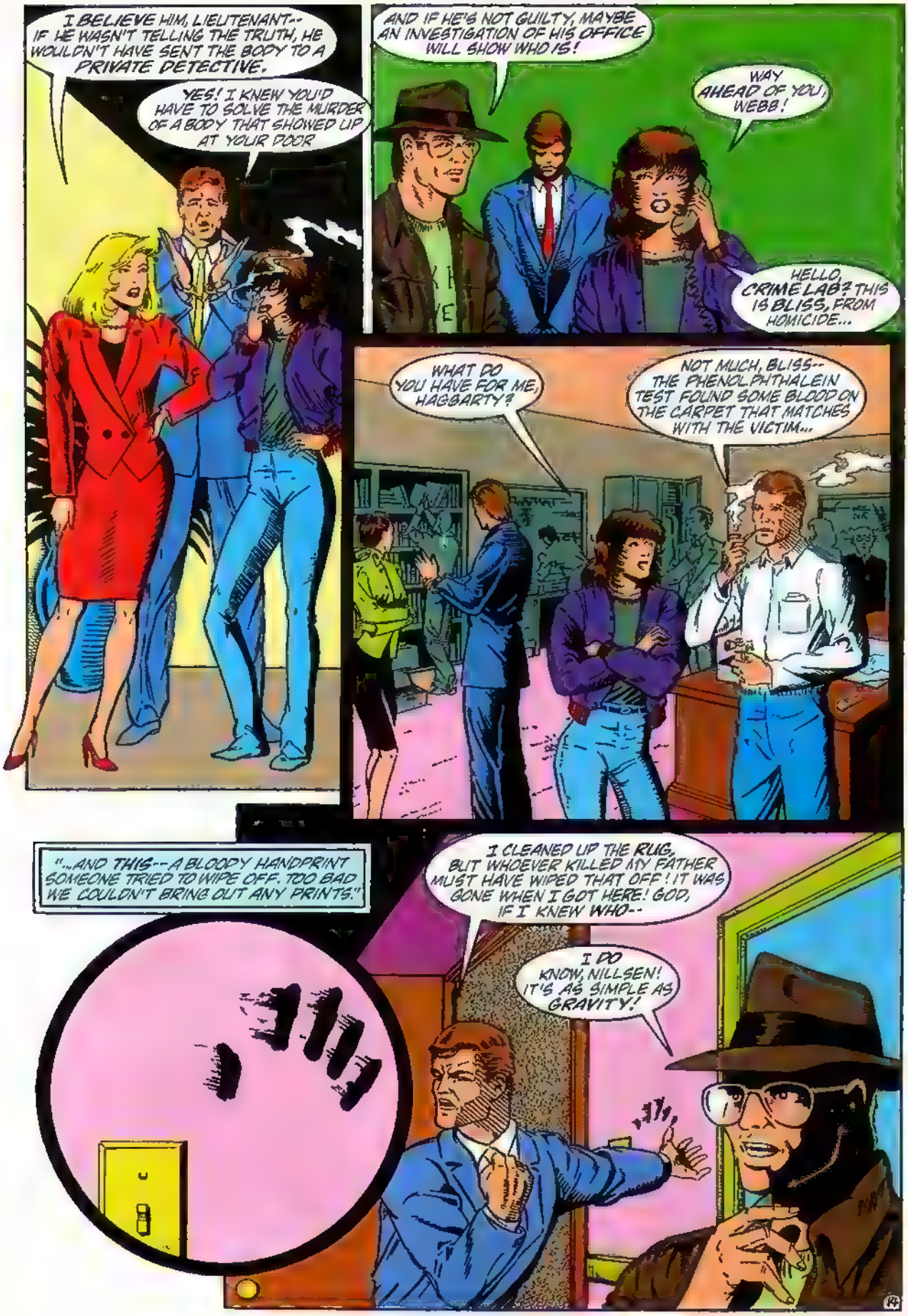
"MRS. HIGGINS, I UNDERSTAND YOU WERE MR. NILLSEN'S SECRETARY?"
>SNIFF< THAT'S RIGHT, MISS--?
JENNIFER MAYS. I'M A PRIVATE DETECTIVE, LOOKING INTO MR. NILLSEN'S DEATH. DID YOU SEE HIM LEAVE LAST NIGHT?
>SNIFF< NO, HE WORKED LATE. HE OFTEN DID. HE BUILT THIS PLACE, AND HE LOVED IT. IF YOU ASK ME, MISS MAYS, YOU NEED LOOK NO FARTHER THAN MR. NILLSEN'S NO-ACCOUNT SON.
HANK NILLSEN? THAT'S A VERY SERIOUS ACCUSATION. HOW CAN YOU BE SO CERTAIN?
"...MR HANK WAS TELLING HIS FATHER TO SELL THE FIRM AND INVEST THE PROFITS. MR. NILLSEN SAID THAT WAS JUST WHAT THE SABOTEUR WANTED, AND HE'D BE--EXCUSE MY LANGUAGE-- DAMNED IF HE'D LET HIM WIN."
THEY FOUGHT. THEY FOUGHT ALL THE TIME, BUT ESPECIALLY LAST NIGHT. IT WAS JUST BEFORE I LEFT...
THEN YOU THINK HANK NILLSEN IS THE SABOTEUR?
AND WHY NOT? HE'S ALWAYS RESENTED HIS FATHER FOR NOT RETIRING AND TURNING THE FIRM OVER TO HIM. MAYBE HE DECIDED IF HE COULDN'T HAVE IT, NO ONE COULD!
BUT IF IT WAS A MURDER FOR PROFIT, THEN WHY DID THE KILLER PUT THE BODY IN A MOVING BOX? YOU'D THINK THE KILLER WOULD WANT THE VICTIM FOUND AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.
"IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT MY RELATIONSHIP WITH MY FATHER--"
9


-- YOU CAN ASK ME TO MY FACE.
I SURE DO KNOW WHERE TO FIND IT.
RELEASE HIM, MR. HANK! IS THAT WHAT YOUR FATHER TAUGHT YOU? TO SOLVE PROBLEMS WITH YOUR FISTS!
--IF I WERE REALLY THE OGRE YOU THINK I AM, I'D HAVE FIRED YOU FOR SAYING SO!
EVERYTHING OKAY HERE, HANK?
THAT'S WHAT YOU THINK OF ME, ISN'T IT, MRS. HIGGINS? BUT REST ASSURED--
EVERYTHING IS FINE, MR HOPKINS. AS LONG AS YOU'RE BOTH HERE, MAY I ASK YOU SOME QUESTIONS?
WHY NOT? WE CAN USE MY OFFICE...
MS. DUNCAIN HAS HIRED ME TO INVESTIGATE MR NILLSEN'S DEATH. I HAVE TO ASK YOU BOTH WHERE YOU WERE LAST NIGHT.
I'LL TELL YOU THE SAME THING I TOLD THAT POLICE LIEUTENANT, MISS MAYS--I WORKED LATE HERE, SPENT A COUPLE OF HOURS AT MY GYM, THEN FELL ASLEEP OVER A CABLE MOVIE.
I SPOKE AT A BENEFIT FOR THE HOMELESS--BLACK TIE, VERY EXPENSIVE. AFTER IT BROKE UP, I WENT BACK TO MY APARTMENT.
ONE THING I'LL TELL YOU, THOUGH...

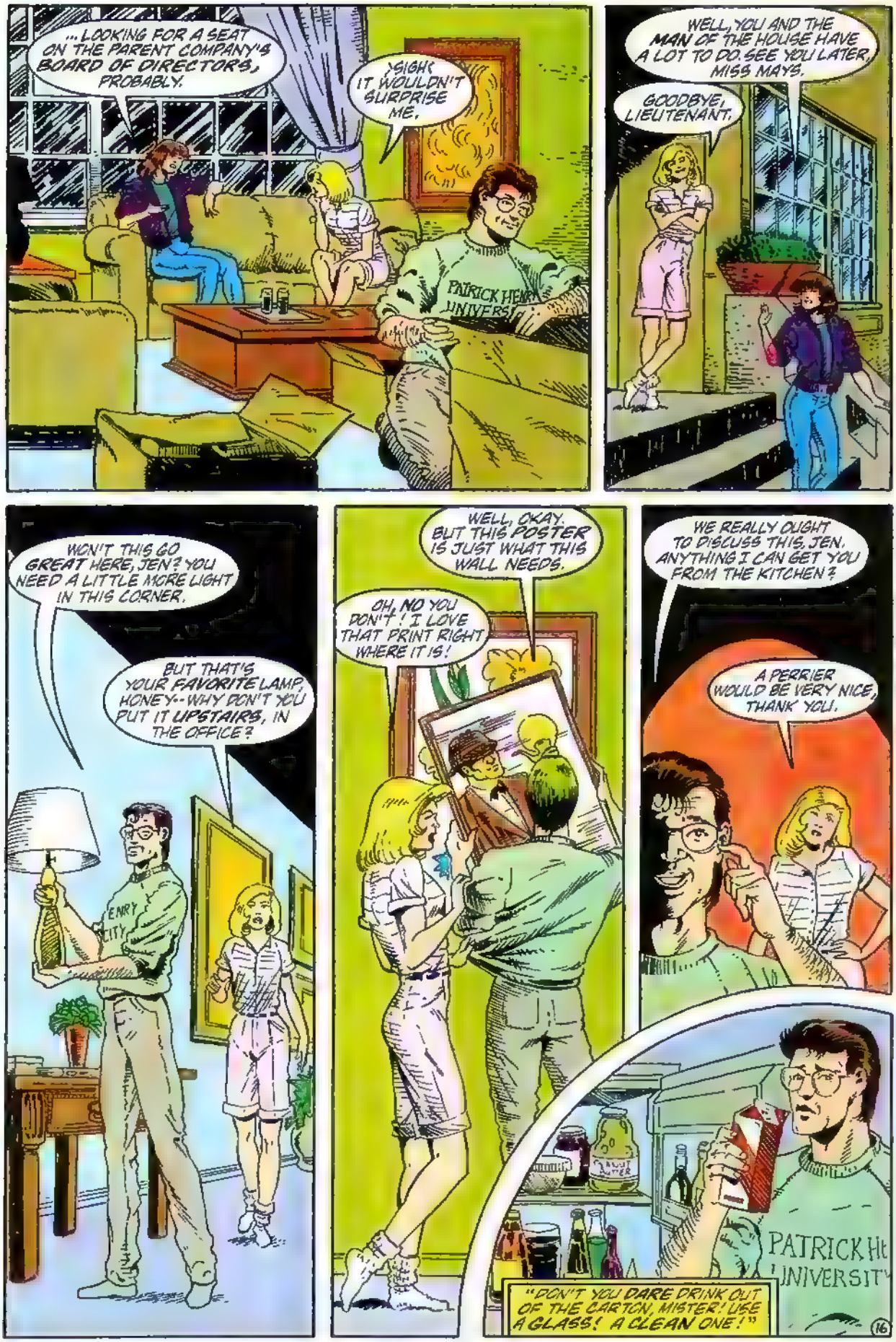

...I'M NOT GOING TO LET THIS SABOTEUR KILL THIS COMPANY LIKE HE KILLED MY FATHER.
IS IT ALSO YOUR OPINION THAT THE SABOTEUR IS THE KILLER, MR. HOPKINS?
FRANKLY, I HOPE SO. I'D HATE TO THINK NILLSEN MOVERS WAS NURSING TWO VIPERS AT ITS BOSOM.
BREEP! A DEEP! A DEEP!
EXCUSE ME.
IT'S FOR YOU, MISS MAYS--YOU CAN TAKE IT OVER THERE.
HELLO? WELL, HELLO, LIEUTENANT.
YOUR OFFICE SAID YOU WERE OUT THERE, MISS MAYS. I HOPE YOU WON'T--
ANYTHING MR. WEBB AND I FIND WE'LL SHARE WITH YOU, LIEUTENANT. WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?
WERE YOU OR MR. WEBB WEARING ANY FLOWERS THIS MORNING?
A CORSAGE HARDLY MEETS MY DEFINITION OF WORK CLOTHES, LIEUTENANT. WHY DO YOU ASK?
THE LAB FOUND A SMALL FLOWER PETAL IN THE BOTTOM OF THE BOX THE BODY WAS IN. IT DIDN'T COME FROM THE CORPSE, SO--
SO IT MUST HAVE COME FROM THE PERSON WHO PUT IT THERE. I THINK YOU'D BETTER COME BACK OUT HERE, LIETENANT.

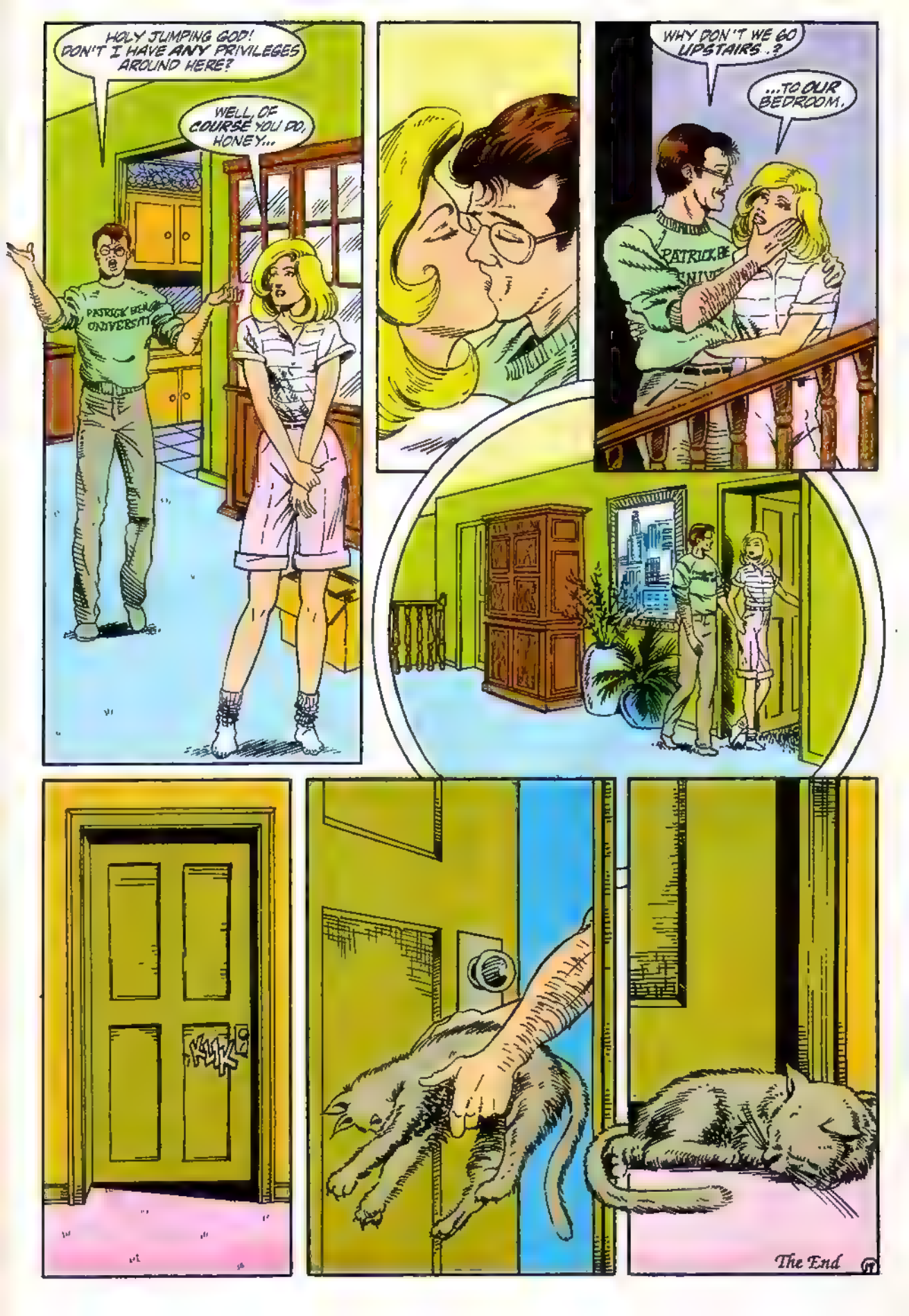

LIEUTENANT BLISS TOLD ME A VERY INTERESTING FACT A FEW MINUTES AGO...
--HER! MR. NILLSEN BROUGHT HER FRESH FLOWERS EVERY DAY FOR YEARS! SHE KILLED HIM!
HOW DARE YOU, MS. DUNCAIN?
...THIS PETAL WAS FOUND IN THE BOX WITH THE CORPSE! BUT IT DIDN'T COME FROM THE CORPSE ITSELF, OR THE MOVERS. THEN WHO?
NO, MS. DUNCAIN-- ALL OF MRS HIGGINS' FLOWERS ARE LARGE, WHILE THE PETAL FOUND WITH THE CORPSE IS QUITE SMALL--
IT CAME FROM THE KILLER, OF COURSE--
--A TRAIT SHARED WITH FLOWERS MEN USE AS BOUTONNIERES. YOU ATTENDED A "BLACK TIE, VERY EXPENSIVE" DINNER LAST NIGHT. DID YOU WEAR A FLOWER IN YOUR LAPEL? IT WILL BE EASY ENOUGH TO CHECK.
ALL RIGHT! I PUT HIM--HIS BODY-- IN THE BOX--
12

--BUT I DIDN'T KILL HIM! I FOUND HIM DEAD!
UH-HUH--RIGHT.
"DAMN IT, I DIDN'T. YES, I RETURNED TO THE OFFICE AFTER THE DINNER LAST NIGHT. I INTENDED TO SEE IF I COULD FIND THE SABOTEUR--TO WIN MY FATHER'S APPROVAL, FOR ONCE.
"I DIDN'T TELL CHIEF HAYNES I WAS HERE. IT'S EASY ENOUGH WHEN YOU KNOW THE ROTATION OF THE SECURITY CAMERAS. I DIDN'T TRUST ANYONE.
"I GUESS MY FATHER HAD HAD THE SAME IDEA. HE MUST HAVE FOUND THE SABOTEUR--UNFORTUNATELY.
"SOMEONE--ONE OF YOU--KNEW I'D BE THE PRIME SUSPECT AFTER THE FIGHT WE'D HAD EARLIER, AND PLANTED HIS BODY IN MY OFFICE.
I SAW YOUR NAME ON THE MANIFEST IN HOPKINS' OFFICE, MISS MAYS--I RECOGNIZED IT FROM AN ARTICLE I READ ON THAT MORRIGAN CASE.
"I CARRIED MY FATHER'S BODY THROUGH THE WAREHOUSE TWICE--ONCE FOR REAL, AND AGAIN IN MY DREAMS.
A NICE STORY, NILLSEN--OF COURSE, YOU'VE HAD ALL NIGHT TO REHEARSE IT...
15


I BELIEVE HIM, LIEUTENANT-- IF HE WASN'T TELLING THE TRUTH, HE WOULDN'T HAVE SENT THE BODY TO A PRIVATE DETECTIVE.
YES! I KNEW YOU'D HAVE TO SOLVE THE MURDER OF A BODY THAT SHOWED UP AT YOUR DOOR
AND IF HE'S NOT GUILTY, MAYBE AN INVESTIGATION OF HIS OFFICE WILL SHOW WHO IS!
WAY AHEAD OF YOU, WEBB!
HELLO, CRIME LAB? THIS IS BLISS, FROM HOMICIDE...
WHAT DO YOU HAVE FOR ME, HAGGARTY?
NOT MUCH, BLISS-- THE PHENOLPHTHALEIN TEST FOUND SOME BLOOD ON THE CARPET THAT MATCHES WITH THE VICTIM...
"...AND THIS--A BLOODY HANDPRINT SOMEONE TRIED TO WIPE OFF. TOO BAD WE COULDN'T BRING OUT ANY PRINTS."
I CLEANED UP THE RUG, BUT WHOEVER KILLED MY FATHER MUST HAVE WIPED THAT OFF! IT WAS GONE WHEN I GOT HERE! GOD, IF I KNEW WHO--
I DO KNOW, NILLSEN! IT'S AS SIMPLE AS GRAVITY!

THE KILLER LEFT THE BLOOD ON THE CARPET, YET HE WIPED OFF THE HANDPRINT--HE OBVIOUSLY KNEW IT WAS INCRIMINATING, AND FOR GOOD REASON.
HE MUST HAVE GOTTEN BLOOD ON HIS HANDS DURING THE MURDER, THEN PUT ON THE ONLY GLOVES HE HAD, TO PREVENT LEAVING PRINTS!
DESPITE THIS, HE LEFT PRINTS OF HIS FINGERS, BUT NONE OF HIS PALMS! WHAT KIND OF GLOVES SHIELD PRIMARILY THE PALMS?
BIKING GLOVES! YOU RODE HERE LAST NIGHT AND KILLED NILLSEN, DIDN'T YOU?
NO! I MEAN, IT WASN'T PREMEDITATED! HE CAUGHT ME AS I WAS ABOUT TO TORCH SOME MORE SHIPMENTS IN STORAGE--
--WHAT ELSE COULD I DO?
YOU BASTARD--!
LEAVE HIM TO THE COURTS, PAL!
"IT'S HAPPENED BEFORE, MISS MAYS--HOPKINS WAS TRYING TO BRING DOWN THE PRICE OF NILLSEN STOCK, SO HE COULD ASSUME CONTROL OF THE COMPANY..."


...LOOKING FOR A SEAT ON THE PARENT COMPANY'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS, PROBABLY.
SIGH. IT WOULDN'T SURPRISE ME.
WELL, YOU AND THE MAN OF THE HOUSE HAVE A LOT TO DO. SEE YOU LATER, MISS MAYS.
GOODBYE, LIEUTENANT.
WON'T THIS GO GREAT HERE, JEN? YOU NEED A LITTLE MORE LIGHT IN THIS CORNER.
BUT THAT'S YOUR FAVORITE LAMP, HONEY--WHY DON'T YOU PUT IT UPSTAIRS, IN THE OFFICE?
WELL, OKAY. BUT THIS POSTER IS JUST WHAT THIS WALL NEEDS.
OH, NO YOU DON'T! I LOVE THAT PRINT RIGHT WHERE IT IS!
WE REALLY OUGHT TO DISCUSS THIS, JEN. ANYTHING I CAN GET YOU FROM THE KITCHEN?
A PERRIER WOULD BE VERY NICE, THANK YOU.
"DON'T YOU DARE DRINK OUT OF THE CARTON, MISTER! USE A GLASS! A CLEAN ONE!"
16


HOLY JUMPING GOD! DON'T I HAVE ANY PRIVILEGES AROUND HERE?
WELL, OF COURSE YOU DO, HONEY...
WHY DON'T WE GO UPSTAIRS..?
...TO OUR BEDROOM.
KLIK
The End

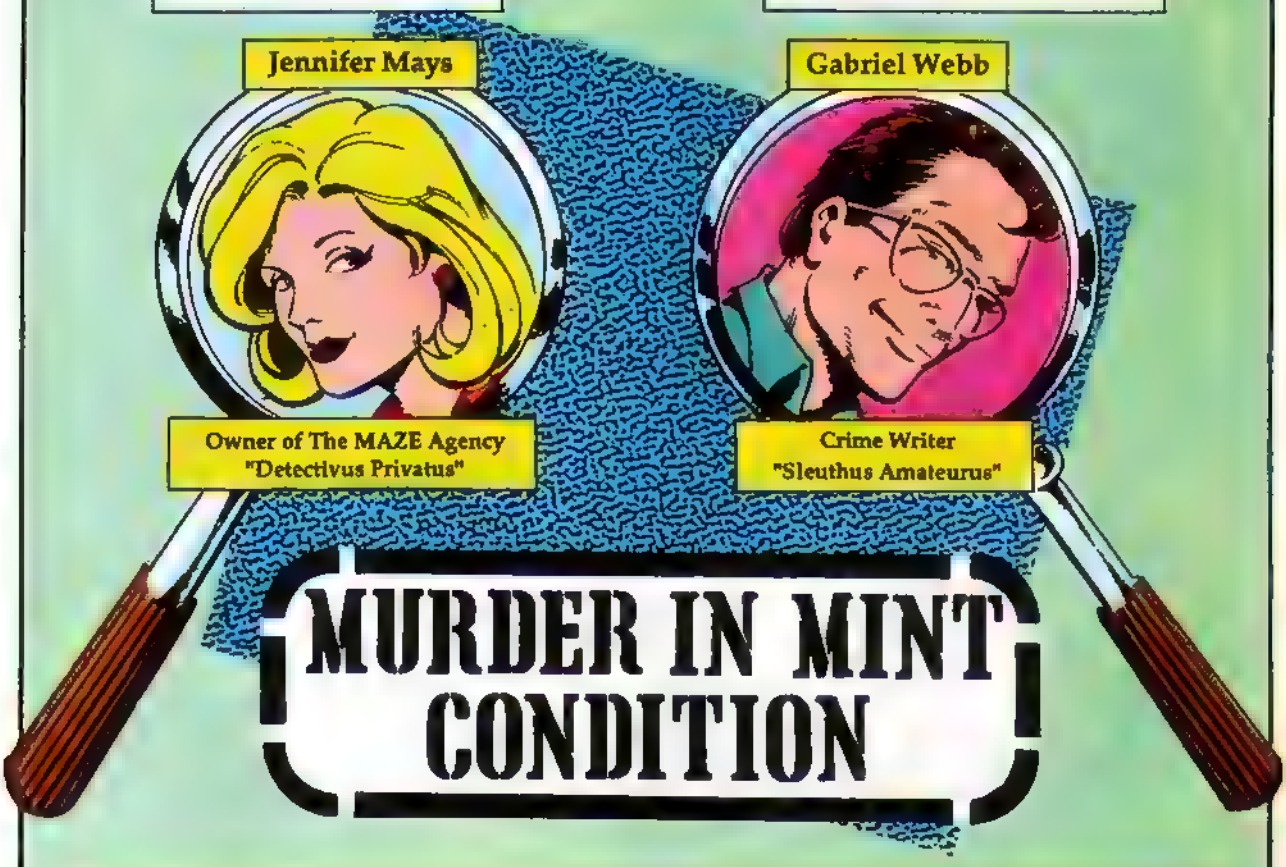
Here's a look at the original 1988 preview story for...

the MAZE AGENCY®

by MIKE W. BARR, ADAM HUGHES & RICK MAGYAR

Solve a MURDER!

Win ORIGINAL ART!



MIKE W. BARR	ADAM T. HUGHES	RICK MAGYAR	BOB PINAHA	MICHAEL EURY
Writer/Creator	Penciller	Inker	Letterer	Editor

"A Love Story About Detectives, A Detective Story About Love"

This story premiered at the 1988 San Diego Comics Con. Attendees received the free quick-printed flyer with instructions to identify both the killer's identity and Jennifer and Gabe's reasoning in determining the killer's guilt. One entry from all the correct responses was selected in a drawing, and the winner received the original art to the inside front cover of this book. The solution, announced at the time of the drawing, has only appeared in an issue of the weekly *Comics Buyer's Guide* trade newspaper.

I'D NO IDEA THERE WAS A COMIC CONVENTION IN THIS HOTEL... WHEN I WAS LITTLE, I USED TO PRETEND I WAS "JUSTICE GIRL"
OH, YEAH? MAYBE I'LL BUY YOU A "JUSTICE GIRL" COSTUME FOR YOUR BIRTHDAY, JEN.
THAT'S CUTE, GABE, BUT I DON'T KNOW THAT I'D EVER WEAR IT..
YOU WOULDN'T?
WELL, NOT IN PUBLIC...
AFTER ALL, RUNNING AROUND IN A SKIMPY COSTUME IS A GOOD WAY TO CATCH YOUR DEATH OF--
GABE, LOOK--!
HE'S BEEN SHOT-- JUST SECONDS AGO, PROBABLY BY A GUN WITH A SILENCER! TELL THE FRONT DESK TO SEAL THE HOTEL, IMMEDIATELY!
YOU GOT IT, BABE! MAYBE I'LL GIVE MY EDITOR A CALL, TOO! I COULD CALL IT "CRIME AT THE COMIC CONVENTION," OR
I'M A PRIVATE DETECTIVE FROM NEW YORK, SERGEANT HILL. WE FOUND THE BODY JUST LIKE THIS.
HE'S ALBERT BRIGGS, ONE'A THESE OLD COMICS DEALERS, MISS MAYS, HERE FOR THE CON. WE ROUNDED UP THREE SUSPECTS, NONE OF 'EM GOT AN ALIBI...
".. HIS WIFE, JUSTINE BRIGGS. THEY'RE GETTIN' DIVORCED, AND THERE'S NO LOVE LOST BETWEEN 'EM.. "
I LOVED ALBERT! IT'S JUST HARD FOR ME TO EXPRESS GRIEF IN FRONT OF STRANGERS!

WHO KILLED ALBERT BRIGGS? TURN THE PAGE AND FIND OUT!

MISS MAYS, IT LOOKS TO ME LIKE THAT COMIC BOOK COVER IMPLICATES ALL OF THEM!
AS IT STANDS, YOU'RE RIGHT, SERGEANT...
BUT BRIGGS TORE THE COVER OFF THE COMIC, TOO--CLASSIFYING IT AS "COVERLESS." DOES THAT TERM IN SOME WAY APPLY TO ONE--AND ONLY ONE--OF OUR SUSPECTS?
JUSTINE BRIGGS HAS THE SAME FIRST NAME AS "JUSTICE GIRL'S" SECRET IDENTITY... THE NAME OF SCRANTON DODD, THE ARTIST, APPEARS ON THE COVER...AND LLOYD FOSTER IS A LAWYER.
I THINK IT DOES--MR. FOSTER!
The End

Barr None: An Interview With The Author

Mike Barr is the name that comes to mind most often in comics when one thinks of logical, well-reasoned comics stories; it doesn't matter whether the characters are super-heroes, detectives, or everyday people. Mike's all-time best-selling graphic novel is *Batman: Son of the Demon*, with artist Jerry Bingham, and Mike's now writing the inevitable sequel. Mike also writes, of course, ***THE MAZE AGENCY*** -- a project he was told couldn't be done in American comics. Fortunately, the nay-sayers were wrong *and* right. Mike's ***MAZE*** work is published in the U.S., as well as in Sweden, with Norway and Denmark to come next year. This interview was conducted at WonderCon in Oakland, California.

INNOVATION: So what was your general background? How did you get started in comics?

MIKE BARR: I always read comics as a kid, and I realized as I got to be a teenager that people *wrote* them. When you're a kid, you don't separate the words from the printed page, and you think that one guy did it all. But they began to mention the names of the writers in the comic book, letter columns, and I began to realize that although I possessed no art talent, I could write a story. I began writing fan letters to comic books, and began submitting scripts, as well. My first professionally-sold fiction was a story to *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, characters that were early prototypes of the characters you see now in ***THE MAZE AGENCY***. And after that I sold a couple of stories to editor Julie Schwartz at DC. The first comic book story I sold was to DC Comics, for Detective Comics in 1974. That led eventually to a staff job at DC, where I worked for a long time on staff and freelance -- a lot of freelance work.

INNOVATION: Where'd you grow up?

MIKE: Akron, Ohio. There were a lot of comic books and books around when I was a kid. My Mother read a lot to me and to my sisters. So I grew up reading and being around books and wanting to read. I started from comics and into novels, but I never quite lost sight of comic books -- I was reading them even when I went into college.

INNOVATION: When were you born?

MIKE: 1952.

INNOVATION: Month and date?

MIKE: May 30th.

INNOVATION: What are some of the books you're best known for, besides the obvious *Batman: Son of the Demon*?

MIKE: Other than the Batman stuff, I wrote a series at DC called *Camelot 3000*, which was a kind of high-concept King Arthur in outer space. King Arthur comes back to life in the year 3000 and re-assembles the knights of the round table to fight aliens. One of the slants is that the round table knights -- there were six of them -- had been reincarnated over the years, and Arthur had to find out who they were. One, who was a male knight centuries ago, was now reincarnated as a woman. That was one of the most popular mini-series and one I enjoyed doing -- it was illustrated by Brian Bolland, and it was Brian's first major work for the American market. That's one of the high points of my career to this day, and I think Brian and I have some real nostalgic feelings about it. It was one of the things that made me reasonably well-known as a comic book writer. People kinda equate "Mike Barr" with it.

INNOVATION: If you had a "wish list" of the one thing you'd *really* want to do, what would it be?

BARR: Do you mean in comics, or --

INNOVATION: -- In comics, or in anything.

BARR: In comics, one of the things I'd like to do is an adaptation of the novel *Atlas Shrugged*, by Ayn Rand. It'd be a great thing to do for a *Classics Illustrated*, but you'd have to do 10 or 12 issues, at least. It's a massive novel. But I'd love to do that

one, because I really like Ayn's writing. I'd like to see *THE MAZE AGENCY* prosper because, although I've been connected with a lot of other comics, *THE MAZE AGENCY* is the thing that's closest to my heart. And I think I'd like to meet a woman who's the spitting image of Jennifer Mays. (Laughter)

INNOVATION: (Laughter) Sounds wonderful! So what's it like working with editor David Campiti?

MIKE: Dave gives me a lot of freedom. Essentially he doesn't want a lot to do with the creative end of the book. The artwork, of course, Dave is in charge of quality control, which is part of his job. But he's not always on my case asking me minute things about character development -- which I like very much. He asks me specific questions about each script is they come in, so I know he's involved with the book, but he's not smothering. He leaves it in my hands to do pretty much whatever I want to do. We have and understanding -- certain things neither of us wants in the book. We won't do full nudity, adults only stuff, things of that nature, because *MAZE* is pretty much a PG type of thing. But that's okay with me, because those aren't the kind of stories I like to do, anyway. So he's not telling me to do anything I wouldn't naturally do automatically.

INNOVATION: Do you have a wife or any children?

MIKE: No, I'm not married. Still a bachelor.

INNOVATION: Some say that the character of Gabriel Webb in *THE MAZE AGENCY* is really you...

MIKE: Yeah, there's a lot of Gabe in me, I guess. *MAZE* is essentially for me a wish-fulfillment. It's not a super-hero series. I don't want to say it's realistic, because it's not. It's as fantastic as *Star Trek* or any fantasy series that exists, because the premise of the series is that the world is a rational place, which isn't always the case in real life. And there's always a happy ending. So Gabe's sort of an extension of myself, yeah. He's more or less a successful writer, and he's got this romantic situation with this beautiful woman, and he solves murders. To me, that's an ideal life.

INNOVATION: That's great!

MIKE: The thing about being a writer is you carry out your fantasies that way. And you get paid for it!

INNOVATION: Works for me! Any inspiration you'd like to give your fans, out there?

MIKE: If you're interested in writing, keep writing. If you're interested in any kind of creative endeavor, keep doing it!

-- Renee Nard
June, 1990

from the desk of
Jennifer Mays

MAZE AGENTS

3622 Jacob Street, Wheeling, WV 26003

BACKSTORY

Times being what they are, we're going to see a lot of fiftieth anniversary issues coming along in the next few months. For a comic book character to survive that long might speak of how good a character is (i.e., Superman, Batman, Captain America, anything created by Gardner Fox), but sometimes it speaks only of how cleverly *merchandised* a character is. There are a lot of characters about to celebrate the half-century mark that are little more than bad ideas hanging on only due to a mixture of nostalgia and product recognizability (we will refrain from dignifying these by name). After all, it's not hard to go the distance when you have lots of money, lots of merchandising, and a big media blitz behind you.

But today we're celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of a character who's received very little media attention over the years; a character who -- like his creator -- has survived and prospered due to quality.

On June 2, 1940, some fortunate Sunday newspapers carried a separate comic-book section whose main feature was a new masked crimefighter called *The Spirit*. Coming almost exactly two years after the advent of Superman, one might expect *The Spirit* to have super-powers. Actually, though he had a flying car in early episodes, his only super-power was -- and remains -- the ability to take inhuman amounts of punishment and come back for more, almost always with his tongue tucked tightly into his cheek.

The Spirit was the brainstorm of a young man named Will Eisner, and though many other people have had hands in producing *The Spirit* over the years, it was always Eisner's vision that guided the character, especially in the years after World War II, when Eisner seemed to write a new chapter on "How To Do Comics" every week.

Today, we're lucky. *The Spirit* comic book, published by Kitchen Sink, dishes out four classic *Spirit* stories a month. But there was a time when there was no regular *Spirit* magazine to be had, and fan and fanatics -- like myself -- had to make do with seeking out reprints, bootlegs, and sometimes even the original sections, when budget permitted.

The lead story this issue is *THE MAZE AGENCY* team's tribute to Will Eisner and his creation, a new story featuring the *MAZE* cast, but using some storytelling devices that -- we hope -- ring familiar chords in our readers' minds.

Rick Magyar and I have wanted to do a story like this for at least sixteen years, since he and I worked out a *Spirit* pastiche which remains unfinished. Times being what they are, though, dependable new artist **Daerick Robertson** finished the last six pages of the story; thank you, Daerick!

William Messner-Loebs is one of the modern comics artists who has been influenced by Eisner and who has worked with him, as has artist **Mike Ploog**, who took time from his busy schedule of film storyboarding to pencil and ink our cover, in the grand Eisner tradition.

I guess I summed it up best in the text column for DC's *Outsiders Special* #1, back in 1987, when I was speaking of Roy Thomas: "Roy is one of only about five people in this business who I like, respect and admire. (Who are the other four? I've got to keep some secrets, but three of them are Will Eisner.)" One of my proudest achievements is *THE MAZE AGENCY*'s nomination for the 1988 Eisners Award as "Best New Series."

Happy anniversary, Will, from all of us here at Innovation and *THE MAZE AGENCY*; may you still be around for *The Spirit*'s 100th.

-- Mike W. Barr

Dear Mike:

Issue #11 of *THE MAZE AGENCY*, "Twas the Crime Before Christmas," was, I think, the one issue that fooled me the most. It was so straight forward and simple that a three-year-old could have solved it. (But, hey, I'm a 23-year-old college student.) The clues were right there in front of my non-color-blind eyes and I couldn't even see them. Oh, well!

The book was once again a well-written, well-plotted masterpiece. Is it my imagination, or was there a bit of symbolism in the book? Specifically, having the refuge for two people, one

HAIL AND FAREWELL Dept.

This issue marks the last regular issue of ***THE MAZE AGENCY*** to feature the artwork of my friend and colleague, **Rick Magyar**, "The World's Most Dangerous Inker."

Rick has worked on more issues of ***MAZE*** than any other artist, and his long-running involvement was gratifying not only from the editorial point of view but from the personal as well, since Rick and I are old friends. However, Rick has by no means severed all ties with ***MAZE***, and he may be popping up in a pencilling or inking capacity when you -- or we -- least expect him.

Best of luck, pal; you take with you all our congratulations and a hearty handshake from Gabe. (Jennifer says she'll give you her farewell gift the next time she sees you.)

--MWB

pregnant, on the run on Christmas Eve, be the "Star Diner"? I thought so.

When Adam Hughes left the book, I thought that the book just wouldn't have that edge that it did when he was here. Yet, with Robb Phipps, the book is still as sharp and beautiful as it was under Adam. I hope that Robb will stay with the book and won't be drawn (ha-ha) away to another company.

The only problem that I have with the book is the colorer. Get a new one. For the past few issues the coloring job has been horrible. There have been too many scenes where everybody looks like they are ghosts, very white and all.

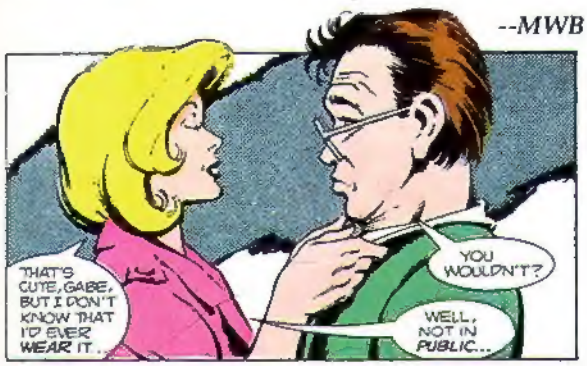
Anyway, thank you for another great issue.

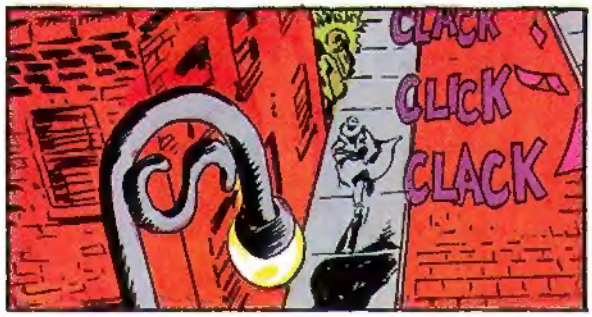
Galen S. West
Ponderosa Hall, #23A
Fresno State University
Fresno, CA 93710

The problem is not so much with our talented team of colorists (which is mainly **Susan Glod,** *with occasional relief by folk like* **Michele Wolfman** *on* **#11***), as it is with the printer. But Publisher Campiti seems to have things worked out now and, rest assured, he's keeping a watchful eye on them. (Which isn't as tough as it sounds; the Innovation offices are only about a quarter of a mile down the road from the printer!)*

As for **#11***'s art, let's not forget the contribution of inker* **Rick Magyar**. *We've been trying out various pencillers lately, the most recent being newcomer* **Allen Curtis**, *and Rick (briefly trading in his inking brush for a pencil) this month, and a talented lass named* **Mary Mitchell** *next month. Let us know what you think, huh? (Like we could stop you!)*

--MWB





Dear Mike, Robb, Rick, and Dave,

(Hey, what about **Susan, Michele,** *and* **Vickie,** *huh? Let's not leave the distaff team out! --MWB)*

I am a relatively new ***MAZE AGENCY*** reader, having started reading with the first Innovation issue.

Issue **#11** was fantastic! Robb's art fits in real well, now that Adam Hughes only does various issues.

Please keep up the good work, and let's see these two (Jen and Gabe) get hitched soon. So long for now.

Dylan Lange
512 Dunkirk Road
Baltimore, MD 21212

Always glad to hear from another Maze Agent, Dylan; welcome aboard. As to Jen and Gabe tying the knot...well, Gabe would like that just fine, but Miss Mays just isn't sure about that yet. But at least they've moved in together, as of this issue. As to what will happen in the future...? Your guess is only a little less good than that of --

--MWB

NEXT ISSUE: It's back to our regular numbering for ***THE MAZE AGENCY #16!***

Jen and Gabe enter the world of books as a cadre of best-selling authors are being murdered, one by one!

Who will be next? Who will be *left*? "...If Books Could Kill" is a case only ***THE MAZE AGENCY*** can solve! Featuring the debut of penciller **Mary Mitchell**, with a cover by the great **Russ Heath** and story by your obedient servant --

-- Mike W. Barr

INNOVATION™

Summer Fun Just Wouldn't Be Summer Without 'Em!

Anne Rice's THE VAMPIRE LESTAT #5 -- Full-color cardstock format. The lavishly-painted adaptation of the best-selling novel continues! "The Vampire Armand" is adapted by **Faye Perozich** and **Daerick Gross**. Stunning cover painting by **John Bolton**!

CAPTAIN OATMEAL #1 -- (All-American Comics) Black-and-white one-shot. A bran-new kind of hero -- titanic tales from the the strange mind of **George Broderick**! Cover by **George Broderick** & **Mark Yanko**!

CYBERPUNK: BOOK TWO #2 -- Full-color mini-series. Alma vs. the Hotboys and the Grey Lensman, as Topo lies dying. "Almost (Half In Love)" is by **Scott Rockwell**, painted by **Doug Talalla**. Wrap-around cover painting by **Doug Talalla**!

HERO ALLIANCE #9 -- Full-color series. Kris's terrible fate is hardly an act of "Brotherly Love," by **Robert M. Ingersoll, David Campiti, Mark Jones** & **Michal Dutkiewicz**. Powerful cover by **Bart Sears** & **Ron Lim**!

HERO ALLIANCE ANNUAL #1 -- Full-color special. A trio of sensational stories, drawn by **Paul Smith, Mark Jones**, and **John Hebert**. Hit the beach with a wrap-around cover by **Paul Smith**, airbrushed by **Mark McNabb**!

INNOVATION PREVIEWS #3 -- Our FREE magazine of summertime information and interviews! Cover by **John Bolton**!

THE JUSTICE MACHINE #4 --Full-color series. "The Ragnarok Portfolio" concludes...but not the way you'd expect! By **Mark Ellis** and **Mike & Valerie Gustovich**. Unusual wrap-around cover by **Mike Gustovich**!

LEGENDS OF THE STARGRAZERS Trade Pbk. #2 -- Full-color graphic novel. The sexy sailors of the spaceways, by **Cynthy J. Wood, Matt Thompson, Randy Elliott, Tom Yeates**, and more. Cover by **Thompson** & **Elliott**!

POWER FACTOR #1 -- The acclaimed super-team about the death of the heroes is back -- with an all-new story by **Robert M. Ingersoll, Scott Clark**, and **Mike Witherby**! PLUS: The original tale by **Kevin Juaire** & **Tom Lyle**. Violent wrap-around cover by **Matt Thompson** & **Randy Elliott**!

Next:

"If Books Could Kill..."

She'll Die Trying To Sell A Book For You!